

S E X I N T H E A R T S

SEX IN THE ARTS

A SYMPOSIUM

EDITED BY
JOHN FRANCIS McDERMOTT
AND
KENDALL B. TAFT



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SEX IN THE ARTS

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FIRST EDITION

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FOREWORD

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IN AN era rife with revaluations, it is rather surprising that heretofore no very serious attempt has been made to examine those expressions of the human spirit generically referred to as The Arts. It is especially surprising that no individual or group of individuals has undertaken the task of pointing out the important part played in modern expression by what is clearly its chief motivating force—Sex. The fact has perhaps been taken for granted, and seemed to call for no exposition. The time has come, however, for a clearer understanding and a more penetrating analysis of the forces which give originality, colour, and life to the creative expression of our day. With such an object in view, we have brought together in this volume a number of spokesmen, each one of whom has something to say that is of immediate interest and possibly of lasting value.

This book is in no sense an instrument of propaganda. The views expressed are the views of the individual contributors; they vary to the degree that each writer has seen truth and has recorded his observations thereon. As editors, we have insisted only upon certain necessary limitations of subject and upon general principles of organization. We have made every reasonable effort to secure competent practitioners, students, and critics of The Arts as our col-

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laborators; having made such selection, we have assumed that each expositor was capable of dealing with his subject in an intelligent and moderately dispassionate manner.

It will be observed that some of the essays deal with rather broadly generalized topics, while the others, which are in the majority, deal specifically with individual Arts. The general articles, written by psychologists and other scientific investigators of social phenomena, were felt to be necessary, in that they illuminate the background upon which the creative strivings of modern man are projected. From this point of view, the articles by Mr. Calverton, Miss Downey, Mr. Briffault, and Mr. Meyer may be considered introductory essays. Aside from their introductory function, however, we believe that each of these articles has an intrinsic and independent value.

Certain omissions and inclusions perhaps call for a brief statement. Some readers may wonder why there is no extended discussion of modern architecture—surely an important Art. The difficulties inherent in the subject are obvious; in spite of those difficulties, both Mr. Meyer and Mr. Sanborn have attempted to deal with the theme; in their respective essays, each has considered the force of sex as a motive in contemporary architecture. . . . Other readers may consider that the inclusion of journalism and advertising among The Arts involves a somewhat violent extension of the term. To which accusation, we might answer, in the “foolish figure” of Polonius: “ ’Tis true; ’tis true ’tis pity; and, pity ’tis ’tis true.” At the same time, we are convinced that most of those who read the articles by Mr. Pringle and Mr. Bent would regret their exclusion from this survey.

Our sincerest thanks are due to all who have co-operated in the making of this volume. The patience and forbearance of the contributors, their willingness to conform to our editorial policies, and their enthusiasm for the project, have all been heartening, especially at those times when seemingly

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insurmountable difficulties have confronted us. Two of our contributors, Mr. Max F. Meyer and Mr. V. F. Calverton, have been exceptionally liberal in passing on ideas which, we are sure, have worked toward the betterment of the entire book. We wish to record, also, our gratitude to our publishers, who have been uniformly courteous and helpful, and who have been largely responsible for converting the idea from which this book grew, into its present realization. For suggestions and aid of various kinds, we are indebted to many whose names do not appear here, but whose services belong to that class best described as invaluable.

THE EDITORS

INTRODUCTION

by FLOYD DELL

WE HAVE in our lifetimes been going through a change in manners and ideas with respect to sex, a change which has been both reflected and promoted by the arts; and of the state of the arts today as a result of that change, this volume is a report and an attempt at interpretation by various expert observers. They disagree, as experts always do. But it is striking to find so much agreement among them upon one unexpected conclusion—the comparative sexlessness of the arts today. Since that phrase sums up the matter too boldly, without any of the obvious reservations and exceptions, the point is more justly illustrated by some brief quotations.

"The serious modern drama," says Elmer Rice, "in its treatment and discussion of sex is timid, squeamish, superficial and conventional."

As to the new music, Paul Rosenfeld points out that "the recent compositions are noteworthy for their barrenness of a peculiar quality of loveliness, sensuous warmth, enticing tenderness. They tend toward the brusque, stern, severe . . ." In fact, "in the very latest music, neither love nor the 'feeling through woman' predominates, neither in the literary subject nor in the quality of the music itself."

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In short, "the ultramodern music-makers have less to say about sexual relationships than their predecessors."

As to poetry, Henry Morton Robinson tells us "there exists a serious blockage between our poetry and its reservoir of sexual energy—a blockage resulting in the creative languor, and more noticeably, the melancholy puzzlement of our chief poets."

Apologizing for what may seem "a gigantic and absurd paradox," Struthers Burt reports that "there is, in any broad and human sense, practically no such thing as sex in the motion pictures, and that is one of the principal charges, perhaps the principal charge, to be brought against them."

Ted Shawn, while claiming for the modern art of the dance, in comparison with the modern drama, "far more freedom, fearlessness and variety in dealing with sex themes," points out concerning one of the two founders of the modern dance, Isadora Duncan, that "in spite of this force running fiercely and wildly in her private life and emotions, sex almost never came into her art product. . . . She was wind and waves and the night sky, but never once was she a mere woman expressing the sex lure of womanhood." Of the other founder of the modern dance, Ruth St. Denis, he relates that she went at first "to the religious cults of the Orient, where dancing was an austere and sacred ritual and discipline" and did not until a later period introduce "erotic subject matter" into her work.

C. J. Bulliet, in a report running in the main quite contrary to any theory of the comparative sexlessness of modern painting, nevertheless remarks that Cézanne was "afraid of women" and instinctively disliked them. "Cézanne's nudes, in consequence, are sexless, and, as it is Cézanne rather than Renoir who has stamped the Modern movement, sex tends to a low ebb among the more faithful of his disciples, of whom Matisse and Picasso are two." A large incidental admission about Modern Painting!

He quotes also from the manifesto of the Italian Futur-

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ists: "The nude in painting is as nauseous as adultery in literature. . . . Painters possessed of the desire to display on canvas the bodies of the women with whom they are in love have transformed picture exhibitions into galleries of portraits of disreputables. We demand for the next ten years the absolute suppression of the nude in painting." Mr. Bulliet comments that all the Modernists proceeded to put this idea into effect with their "violent distortions," and that "for a time it looked as though sex was actually to be eliminated from Modernism."

Edan Wright, in discussing Modern Sculpture, remarks that "the foisting of African motifs on modern art was as much a reaction against sex, of the kind that lay in the naturalistic curves of a woman's body, as the 'Isms'"—that is, Cubism, Futurism, and Vorticism. The revolt, however, she says, "instead of freeing art from sex by adopting the motifs of people unconscious of it, focused on it."

The reports on all these arts pay tribute to the freer expression of sexual interests in modern fiction. That field is dealt with by John Cowper Powys, who selects Proust, Dreiser, Joyce, and Lawrence as the four great modern writers whose influence can be most definitely estimated. Proust, however, who in Mr. Powys's opinion comprehends sex in a wider way than any of the others, has had "little influence." Dreiser's books all celebrate the elemental overpoweringness of the human "sex-urge," and the weight of Dreiser's prestige "has been entirely and faithfully thrown on the side of moral freedom." Nevertheless, sex is to Dreiser a mystery even more than an allurement, and thus his literary influence has been, "in a very deep sense, rather a mystical than an hedonistic one." It is not Proust and Dreiser, it is Joyce and Lawrence "who are the masters of our younger contemporaries." And "Joyce's handling of sex from first to last is a reaction from Seminarist oppression. Behind it all seethes and smokes that appalling Sermon upon Hell's Torments, physical and spiritual, which

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the young priest-neophyte listened to with terrified ears in *The Portrait*." As for Lawrence, "he advocates a 'dark god' cult which is nothing less than an apotheosis of a certain kind of lust." But, asks Mr. Powys, of what kind of lust? "Certainly not of any easy, furtive, indolent, hedonistic self-indulgence. Disciples of Lawrence very quickly discover that where the burden of Jesus weighs on us like a lath of wood, the burden of Lawrence weighs on us like a bar of iron." In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the lover's insistence upon Lady Chatterley's use of all the little four-letter words amounts, says Mr. Powys, to a "physiological priggishness."

If, then, the celebrated freedom of modern fiction is most significantly illustrated by writings which represent an obsessive reaction against Catholic sex-repressions and a new religious priggishness about sex, and if it is taken into account that some of the chief works of these writers have only an underground and illegal circulation, this superior freedom of fiction seems reduced somewhat in its dimensions. Immense individual genius in the expression of a horrified fascination with sex or a profound fear of woman is not quite equivalent to a general freedom to be frank about sex in the art of fiction. That general freedom, in spite of these contraband activities, is not yet manifest.

On the edge of the arts, however, are two large realms into which the new freedom of expression about sex has marched with the banners and trumpets of a conqueror, realms in which frankness is legal and overwhelmingly popular. Henry F. Pringle tells the story of how the formal decencies and dignities of Journalism surrendered to sexual frankness because of the public demand. And Silas Bent tells how Advertising discovered that sex would help sell anything and everything. Elsewhere in these pages, Elmer Rice pays a tribute to the freedom of the advertising columns. "A fellow playwright and I," he says, "once made a comparison of the content of such advertising matter, in

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magazines whose circulation runs into the millions, with the innocuous and infantile fiction in the adjoining columns. It would have been utterly impossible for any writer for these magazines to have even remotely suggested that any of his characters was afflicted with any of the ailments or physical disabilities which were so graphically described and commented upon in the paid advertisements. No dramatist has yet attempted to repeat upon the stage the 'confidences' which are so publicly exchanged by the heroines of the advertising pages, or to reproduce the window displays of any corner drug store."

Life, then, including the newspapers and the advertising pages, is freer and franker and less squeamish about sex than are any of our arts. And the life of action is freer and franker and less squeamish by far than our tabloids and our advertising pages. To the extent that the arts involve attempts to organize the chaos of life into emotionally satisfying harmonies and unities, this is necessarily the case. We do many things which we get no satisfaction in contemplating or remembering; we are ashamed of some of the things that we do, and prefer to forget them. Art is at its best the organization of these painful things into beauty, as Keats organized disease and poverty and death into beauty in his "Ode to a Nightingale," as Euripides organized the shameful horrors of war into beauty in *The Trojan Women*. In so far as sex is happy, without regret or shame, there is little occasion for the artist to deal with it in his work, except by way of reminder to himself and us that it *can* be happy and without regret or shame. Much, however, of the unhappiness, shame and regret which attend sex in our minds is a socially artificial creation, from the burden of which new and freer social arrangements are relieving us. But we have, all of us,—not merely the stupid censors, but the most enlightened and liberal-minded of us, including the present writer and the present reader,—deep-rooted sexual prudishnesses, some of which *may* be ineradicable,

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as being part of the taboo upon which family life is founded and by which human progress has been made possible. Part of the task of art has been to placate this primeval and superstitious prudishness of ours; and one of its means has been to let us pay for each of our imaginative sexual pleasures by a reminder of death. That simple trick is the technical foundation of every great romantic masterpiece. Another tendency of this deep-rooted prudishness of ours is to take advantage of the human mind's love of noting identities between different things, the pleasure we have in calling attention to these identities by simile and metaphor and symbol. We thus avert the evil eye and ward off the frightful doom which might overtake us if we called sexual things by their own names; we make the kiss, for example, the symbol of a sexual act which we superstitiously prefer not to name. This use of symbolism has been immensely successful; there is, it can scarcely be denied, more of the riches of sex in the romantic verse of Tennyson than in the whole body of anti-romantic verse produced in the present century. But the romantic convention, which began by symbolizing the unnamable facts of sex, ended by denying their existence and pretending that kissing, for example, was the totality of sex for nice-minded people; and the romantic convention thus became a nuisance which had to be overthrown. In the meantime there is some evidence leading toward the belief that the general public is less afraid of sex, less superstitious about it, more philosophic, more humorously tolerant of its contradictions and vagaries, than our artists—than Joyce and Lawrence, Matisse and Picasso, Epstein and Gill, and Isadora Duncan. This fact—if indeed it is a fact—does not in the least constitute a criticism of these artists. They have made beauty out of their pain. But the public appears to be in somewhat less pain in this matter of sex than are our artists. And the “revolt against sex” to which these present papers testify in the various arts finds no parallel in the public's own attitude. The public

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enjoys immensely and apparently without a pang or a qualm the new frank interest in sex, and simply does not read or look at or listen to, except as a matter of fashion, those art works which record the terrible strug' es of the artist with his fears and shames about sex. The public pays willingly for its imaginative sexual pleasures by accepting some form of imaginary punishment, according to the ordinary æsthetic formula, as recently illustrated in Dreiser's *American Tragedy* and again in Elmer Rice's *Street Scene*. But it prefers the voluptuous bar-room nudes of Bouguereau to the soul-tortured sculptural mockeries of Epstein about sex. There is much to suggest that the public, without any soul-torment and with much satisfaction, will progress steadily in its freedoms of expression of its sexual interests, and that our arts must await this further progress before they can be simply and innocently frank about sex.

The paper which begins this volume takes a view of the sexuality of art different from that indicated in most of the papers already quoted. V. F. Calverton, in a discussion of the Literary Arts, finds sexuality increasingly everywhere in them all. The very same modern drama which Mr. Rice regards as timid, squeamish and conventional about sex, Mr. Calverton regards as exhibiting a sexual candour "scarcely surpassed by the Elizabethan or Restoration stage"; and Edna St. Vincent Millay, whom Mr. Calverton names as one of the great modern iconoclasts of the romantic tradition in poetry, is to Mr. Robinson an arch-romantic over whose reactionary performances he indignantly mourns!

Morris L. Ernst, who concludes the volume with a paper on Sex and Censorship, tells us that "since 1915 the leading vice agency of the United States, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, has failed to get a single conviction in a single case where a book was published with an established publisher's imprint, where the book had been openly sold by the retailers and reviewed by the

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press." Our artists may be, as it has been suggested, turning away from sex, but the public is turning toward it. "The battle over sex is fading," says Mr. Ernst. So quickly have our public standards changed that, as he says, the people who were shocked at certain books a few years ago, must wonder, looking at those books now, what in the world they were so shocked at! I confess that my own impression after reading the contents of the present volume is different from what it was before; that I have found less significant leadership in the arts than I took for granted in the matter of courageous frankness (Dreiser in his time being a notable exception); and that such real progress as has been made seems due more to the public than to the arts.

The arts, to be sure, have other fish to fry, and need not be reproached for turning away from sex, if—as Mr. Rosenfeld suggests in his admirable paper on music—they are turning toward social relations and political and philosophical ideas.

S E X I N T H E A R T S

Chapter One

THE LITERARY ARTS

by v. f. calverton

THE PART which sex has played in literature, it should be stated at once, has varied with respective classes and cultures. The great concern which exists today over the rôle of sex in the various arts is a direct outgrowth of certain changes in our culture which have thrust sex into the foreground. The presence of sex in literature, therefore, should not be misconstrued as a modern development. It extends into Greek and Roman literature and, in an even more remote sense, into ancient religious record.

The point we must first bear in mind, however, is that no literatures have been so concerned with sex as a problem as those of Europe and America in the last few hundred years. While Greek and Roman literatures dealt with sex and sex scenes, it was always in a minor and not a major way. Sex presented no problem to them. Aside from such a primeval taboo as incest, there was little about sex to worry or alarm the ancient Greeks or Romans. Their sex lives were unharassed by the torturing circumscriptions of sexual impulse which were foisted upon man with the coming of Christianity. Before the coming of Christianity sex was a natural and conscious part of human activity; Christianity made it unnatural and drove it into the unconscious.

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Nevertheless, in the centuries that followed, the aristocracies never allowed their conduct to be constricted by Christian ethics. Nothing revealed the fact so well as the literatures which grew up under their patronage. It was the middle class which found Christian ethics so congenial to its way of life, and which actually attempted to put Christian sexual morality into practice. It was this attempt to superimpose an unnatural and repressive sexual morality upon the post-Renaissance world that resulted in forcing sex into the unconscious and in the creation of a literature which, bringing that unconscious into consciousness, revolted about sex as its pivot of motivation. A quick examination of European and American literatures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will reveal at once the preponderant position sex has held in them. The main motivation which dominated these literatures centred about the concept of love. Not love as the ancient Jews, Greeks, or Romans viewed it, but the romantic love which originated in its illicit form in Provence and was converted into legal tender by the middle class which adopted it as part of its moral tradition. This exaltation of romantic love was unquestionably a sublimation of the sexual impulse which had been driven beneath the cover of the unconscious by the suppressive morality of the middle class. The great problem created by this suppressive morality was that of keeping individuals from violating its code. As a consequence the bulk of eighteenth and nineteenth century literatures was concerned with the struggles of individuals who either succeeded in observing the code or failed to observe it. In large part literature became a triangular affair in which the tug of sexual impulse and the pull of moral duty provided the main source of conflict. The attitude of mind, then, which had made the Greek critics upbraid Euripides for picturing the maudlin spectacle of a woman in love was completely reversed. It was the woman in love who became the protagonist in middle-class literature. Beginning with

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The London Merchant and *Pamela* in the eighteenth century, this love motif grew in strength, and in the nineteenth century it became, with all its triangular ramifications, the all-pervading force—reaching its highest point of excellence in Gustave Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*.

What has happened in the twentieth century, therefore, is not the reintroduction of sex into literature, which many have contended, but the transformation of the rôle which sex has played in European literatures. European literatures were just as permeated with sex in the nineteenth century as they are today in the twentieth. It was ancient literature that was not dominated by sex. Ancient literatures—and Oriental literatures today, for that matter—encouraged sexual symbolism, but they did not make sex into a problem or an obsession. The unrepressive nature of their *mores* saved them from that pathologic tendency. It was the character of European *mores* that made sex into so troublesome an issue. In European literatures in the nineteenth century, for example, the sexual element was sublimated under the guise of love; in the twentieth, romantic love having lost its old meaning, that sublimation has disappeared and the sexual impulse has expressed itself in more overt form in poem, novel, and drama.

We can see at once, therefore, that the contention that nineteenth century literature was free of sex while twentieth century literature is full of it is fundamentally untrue. Twentieth century literature is considered full of sex because its sexual elements are unveneered and unromanticized. Sex in twentieth century literature is not sublimated under the concept of love but appears as a natural fact, with its physical manifestations paramount. Even its psychological components are not sentimentalized or idealized. To realize the importance of this contrast one needs only to turn to the novels of Charles Dickens or George Eliot and contrast them with those of Aldous Huxley or D. H. Lawrence. In the love scenes of Dickens and Eliot the sug-

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gestion of body is absent; only the conflict of soul is permitted to occur. In the novels of Huxley and Lawrence there are no love scenes in the old sense of the word; there are only erotic scenes. More than that, there is always and everlastingly the presence of body and seldom, if ever, the suggestion of soul. Dickens' Agnes and David Copperfield and Eliot's Maggie Tulliver believed in romance and renunciation; Huxley's Philip Quarles and Lawrence's Lady Chatterley believe in realism and release.

In the contrast between renunciation and release one is brought face to face with the underlying difference in sexual attitude which found expression in nineteenth and twentieth century literature. With but few exceptions the sexual solution of nineteenth century literature was in the form of renunciation. Maggie Tulliver's renunciation of Stephen Guest and Jane Eyre's renunciation of Rochester were typical examples of this motivation. It was such renunciation which exalted and ennobled. In twentieth century literature, on the other hand, such renunciation is out of date and out of order. It is release that has replaced it. Beginning at the end of the last century in such a novel as Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* and developing in H. G. Wells's novel, *Ann Veronica*, the resolution of release became almost a tradition in the literature which sprang up in the teens and twenties of this century. Indeed, one can scarcely pick up a novel today which does not exemplify this new attitude. It is present in low-brow romances as well as high-brow fiction. *Bad Girl*, *Village Virgin*, *Ex-Wife*, and *Millie* illustrate this motivation as well as *The Sun Also Rises*, *Farewell to Arms*, *Jurgen*, and *The Genius*.

As a result of this change from renunciation to release, and from repression to expression, the novel has already developed a new sexual vocabulary. This new sexual vocabulary, however, at least in its current form, is a recent invention. In the first novels which began to break away

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from the nineteenth century tradition, the change in vocabulary was slight. Indeed, such advanced novels as Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Harold Frederic's *Damnation of Theron Ware*, and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* retained almost in entirety the nineteenth century nomenclature.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that sexual candour had found ample expression in the literature of the aristocracy. To this very day many of the old classics, particularly Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, are read as pornographic items rather than as literary masterpieces. The sexual candour of Boccaccio and Rabelais, however, ceased as a tradition with the triumph of the middle class. In England Fielding and Smollett were the last to cling to something of that old tradition. After Fielding sex was transformed into love and the physical aspects of man became lost in the psychological. Nineteenth century literature dealt with psychological man but denied physical man. Consequently, its vocabulary was ill adapted to deal with the physical man who was rediscovered in twentieth century literature.

It was for that reason that the first authors who broke away from the nineteenth century tradition did not create a different vocabulary. They had their characters do different things, become involved in different situations, and make different decisions, but they kept their situations and decisions within such bounds that they could be described in terms of the old diction. In fact, when Hardy went so far as to describe a feminine character as "amorous," he was advised by Leslie Stephen, acting then as editor of *Cornhill Magazine*, to change the adjective to "sentimental." Even Dreiser in *Sister Carrie* did not use words which would have terrified a Victorian. In truth, he actually used a good deal of the Victorian vocabulary in his narrative. It was the conception of the novel that advanced, not its style. The very titles of its chapters were streaked with Victorian

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Sentimentality. Note such titles as these: In Elf Land Disporting; The Grim World Without; Without the Walled City; The Slope of the Years; The Kingdom of Greatness; The Pilgrim Adream; When Waters Engulf Us We Reach for a Star; The Lure of the Material; Beauty Speaks for Itself—and then read the last paragraph of the novel itself, and you will realize at once how exceedingly close Dreiser was in his younger days to the Victorian tradition, which later on he was to repudiate with such vigour. Even David Graham Phillips in *Susan Lenox*, a novel which startled the American public in daring to tell the truth about the life of a prostitute, did not employ a much franker style than its predecessors.

It was the World War, marking the final decay of the nineteenth century middle-class tradition, that brought about the great change in sex expression in literature. Influenced, no doubt, by the sex release which the war created, a release which affected women as well as men, the sexual vocabulary employed in literature underwent swift change. In James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which appeared in 1916, something of this change was already apparent. James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen* was another sign of the change. D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, which was destroyed by order of court,—after which Lawrence wrote no other novel for five years,—pointed also in the same direction. Then followed a race of new fiction in which the new sex vocabulary became an inalienable part. In the late twenties in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and *Farewell to Arms* this new sex vocabulary reached a high point of candour, eclipsed only by the sex candour of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

This new sex vocabulary was characterized by its bold adoption of the language of the street. The words which at one time were relegated to pornography were now used in the regular run of realistic fiction. Instead of couching

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erotic desire under the head of romantic love, these new realists deal with it in its more naked forms, as a raw physical fact. When we remember that in 1823 so innocuous a writer as Sir Walter Scott was asked to rewrite a passage in *St. Ronan's Well* lest it strike the public as "improper," we can readily see what a long way these contemporary realists have gone in their word-revolt.

This new realism, however, has not stopped at the boundaries of normal sexual impulse, but has in its explorations plunged into almost every form of abnormality and perversion. Practically no form of sexual pathology has been untouched by it. Homosexuality, incest, sodomy, necrophilia, onanism—all have been exploited with startling candour by contemporary fictionists. The homosexual motif has found exciting expression in such novels as Radcliffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*, André Birabeau's *Revelation*, André Tellier's *Twilight Men*, Rosamund Lehman's *Dusty Answer*, André Gide's *Counterfeiters*, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, and Blair Niles' *Strange Brother*. Lorine Pruette's novelized biography of *Sappho* is another indication of the same tendency. Marcel Proust, to be sure, has excelled all others in his revelation of the homosexual reaction. In Jean Cocteau's novel *Les Enfants Terrible* and Gunther's novel *A Room in Berlin*, incest is the dominant motivation. Of course, the incest motif had been foreshadowed in Artzibasheff's *Sanine*. Onanism has played a prominent part in many modern novels, although without doubt it has figured with most conspicuous success in de Selincourt's *One Little Boy* and Robert Wolf's *Springboard*. One of the best examples of sodomy in the contemporary novel is to be found in D. H. Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, where the woman's passion for a horse becomes almost as obsessing as the sodomic urge in Robinson Jeffers's "Roan Stallion." It is not the kind of sodomy, however, which is apostrophized in the Earl of Rochester's poem "Sodom, or the Quintescence of Debauchery." The

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Earl of Rochester was interested in sodomy as an amusing and fascinating diversion; Lawrence and Jeffers are interested in it as a significant and revealing obsession, an overwhelming craving of the mind as well as the body. Necrophilia was the main theme of Mark Rodson's story "The Undertaker," which met with the condemnation of the post office authorities who banned from the mails the issue of the *Modern Quarterly* in which that story appeared. Despite this ban and despite the nature of its theme, the story was awarded a mark of special distinction by Edward J. O'Brien in his *Best American Short Stories of 1928*.

II

If we turn to drama and poetry we shall find a perfect parallel of these developments which we have described in fiction. Sex was replaced by love in eighteenth century drama, and as the middle-class tradition grew in influence the tendency to expurgate old dramas of their "candour and coarseness" became an established habit. In an 1830 edition of Webster's plays the editor openly commented on the fact that the English stage had purified itself of the coarseness Webster had been addicted to in his art. The editor's words are revealing:

The public taste has now reached the highest pitch of refinement, and such coarseness is tolerated in our theatre no more.

Charles Lamb described the failure of a certain play at the time as due to the fact that one of the characters was a fallen woman, and added, by way of ridiculous and callow justification, that the play was "a most unfortunate choice in this moral day . . . the audience were as scandalized as if you were to introduce such a person to their private tea-tables."

So deep rooted did this process of purification become, and so holier than holy did the viceless Victorians come to believe themselves to be, that when Ibsen was introduced

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into the English theatre in the 1890's he was condemned as an agent of vice. The tornado of attack that greeted the staging of *Ghosts* is unforgettable. Described by one newspaper as "an open drain . . . a dirty act done publicly" and by another as "garbage and offal," *Ghosts* was denounced on every side by critics, preachers, and politicians. Only the radical moderns of that day defended it, and it was not until a number of years afterwards that Ibsen was accepted on the English stage.

Bernard Shaw, who was one of the few critics to fight for Ibsen when the latter was most unpopular, was one of the first of the English dramatists to reintroduce sex on the stage. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet*, Shaw began his attack upon the older conventions. Shaw, however, it must be remembered, assailed the old attitudes toward sex without advancing the expression of the new ones. "The last of the Puritans," as Samuel D. Schmalhausen brilliantly classified him in his psychoanalytical study of Shaw as man and dramatist, Shaw marks that transition between the old stage and the new. It is amazing to note the complete absence of any sexual scene whatsoever in Shaw's plays. While Shaw attacked the entire sexual structure of nineteenth century *mores*, he came no closer to sex as an intimate personal reality than had his Victorian predecessors. What he did was to clear the way for the twentieth century dramatists by attacking the nineteenth century theories as superstitious and absurd. It was the twentieth century dramatists who, building upon the ideas of Shaw, succeeded in bringing sex back upon the stage. Because the stage is a more public art than the novel this reintroduction of sex was naturally slower and more cautious.

Before the World War few playwrights went further than Shaw in their sexual approach. Again, as in the case of the novel, it was the World War that marked the turn-

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ing-point in sex expression on the stage. While prior to the war the most daring approach to sex on the American stage was to be found in such a play as Eugene Walter's *The Easiest Way*, since the war the advance in sex expression has been so rapid that Walter's play now seems to belong to a different world, an impossibly timid and inhibited world, which only the old generation could understand. Immediately after the war Theodore Dreiser's play, *The Hand of the Potter*, with syphilis as the basis of its motivation, was one of the first dramas to adumbrate the change that was to follow. The next play to signify progress in sexual candour was Sholom Asch's *The God of Vengeance* which not only presented a brothel scene in unabashed style, but also introduced a homosexual situation to intensify the plot. The play was closed by court order and "the producer and eleven actors in the case, including the distinguished Schildkraut [were] convicted by a jury . . . of violating the penal laws of the state of New York." It was in this manner that sexual candour on the stage was greeted in the early twenties. One of the next plays to advance even further in freedom of sex expression was Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*. In Los Angeles this play met with a fate similar to that which befell *The God of Vengeance* in New York. The actors were arrested, their fingerprints taken, and they were forced to undergo a jury trial before they could leave the city. The indictment was based chiefly upon the use of such words in the play as "damn," "hell," and "whore"—words which before the end of the twenties had become commonplaces in stage speech. With the appearance of Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted* in 1925, sexual allusion verged deliberately into the salacious. The fact that this play won the Pulitzer prize that year indicated that the new tendency was already winning acceptance. Since 1925 sexual release has become almost as widespread on the stage as in the novel. Although no

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dramatist has hazarded the extremities of sexual description that James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence have in their novels *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, they have not lagged far behind in the nature of sexual suggestion. In such plays as *The Road to Rome*, *Young Sinners*, *Strictly Dishonorable*, *Kiki*, *Rain*, *The Firebrand*, *The Constant Wife*, *Little Accident*, *Sex*, *Oh Promise Me*, *Farewell to Arms*, and many others, the sexual candour manifest in speech and action was scarcely surpassed by the Elizabethan or Restoration stage. Even homosexuality and incest have become popular in contemporary drama. *The Captive*, an openly Lesbian drama, was one of the most striking plays on the New York stage not very long ago. In addition, the incest theme was interestingly developed in Virgil Geddes's play, *The Earth Between*, which was produced by the Provincetown Players in 1928.

While Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Philip Barry's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* are important in reflecting the change in sexual outlook which has overtaken the contemporary stage, it is only when we turn to such a play as *Lysistrata* that we can fully appreciate the extent of the change that has occurred. It is doubtful if any other significant play in this decade has attracted larger audiences sheerly on account of its piquant salacity. When Aubrey Beardsley in the nineties illustrated *Lysistrata* in its undisguised phallic form he was ferociously attacked for adhering with such determined fidelity to the original version of the drama. Today, however, no one has attacked Gilbert Seldes for even outdoing Aristophanes in many of his sexual allusions and connotations; in fact, without such allusions and connotations the play would never have been a success.

The same sexual release, therefore, that has occurred in the novel has been duplicated on the stage. Where love dominated in the nineteenth century, it is sex that dominates in the twentieth.

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III

Even poetry, although more remote than the novel or the drama from the immediate influence of everyday life, has shared this same revolution in spirit. Along with the novel and the drama it has moved from repression to release, from renunciation to ego-centric assertiveness, converting love into sex in the process of the transformation.

The beginning of the revolt against the eighteenth and nineteenth century conception of sex in poetry can be traced to the pre-Raphaelite movement, and especially to the poetry of Rossetti. Tennyson and Browning, and for that matter even the leaders of the romantic school, Shelley, Byron, and Keats, had all discussed and descanted upon love as a heavenly emotion, unearthly to the extreme. Even Byron, craze-ridden though he was with the impulse to incest, seldom allowed his philosophy of love to descend to the physics of sex. It was Rossetti who started the revolt against this conception. Rossetti, a modern before his time, declared it impossible to separate earthly love from heavenly, and insisted upon viewing the body and soul of woman as one and the same entity:

Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

For inaugurating, thus, the "fleshly" school of poetry (so this school was stigmatized by nineteenth century reviewers and critics), Rossetti was attacked on every side and in the *Contemporary Review* he was assailed, for "putting on record for other full grown men to read the most secret mysteries of sex connection, and that with so sickening a desire to reproduce the sensual mood, so careful a choice of epithet to convey mere animal sensation, that we shudder at the shameless nakedness." Nevertheless, Rossetti's advance in the direction of the modern mood was much slighter than many would suspect. The middle-class mind

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of the nineteenth century sublimated sex so completely under the guise of romantic love that it resented with an unnatural ferocity the smallest attempt to question the virtue and wisdom of that sublimation. It is only when we realize the truth of that fact that we can understand why Robert Buchanan, then writing under the pseudonym of Thomas Maitland, could have been so shocked at the following lines of Rossetti as to describe them as "simply nasty."

He munched her neck with kisses, while the vine
Crawled in her back. . . .

As I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth. . . .

Another poem of Rossetti's, "Nuptial Sleep," was decried with even greater bitterness for its alleged naked atrocities of description and confession. Swinburne, the next poet to take up the cudgels in attack upon the conventional concept, met with even worse fate. His *Poems and Ballads* was not only denounced sharply in the press, but in addition was condemned and burned. Before the publication of this volume of poems—the poems had been indignantly rejected by John Murray when originally submitted to that house—Palgrave, Ruskin, Burne-Jones, Whistler, Lady Trevelyan, Meredith, Richard Burton, Lord Houghton, and even Rossetti had been in consultation with the author as to the feasibility of their appearance in book form. The so-called pagan frankness of Swinburne's poetry has lost its challenge today, however, when a frankness that Swinburne would never have dared has come into vogue.

In the 1890's, in the poetry of John Davidson, Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, and Oscar Wilde the modern outlook made its next advance. In such a poem as Arthur Symons' "Stella Maris" this advance can be discerned:

I, too, have sought on many a breast
The ecstasy of love's unrest,

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I, too, have had my dreams, and met
(Ah, me!) how many a Juliet.

Child, I remember and can tell,
One night we loved each other well;
And one night's love, at least or most
Is not so small a thing to boast.
You were adorable, and I
Adored you to infinity,
That nuptial night too briefly borne
To the oblivion of morn.
Oh, no oblivion! for I feel
Your lips deliriously steal
Along my neck, and fasten there;
I feel the perfume of your hair,
And your soft breast that heaves and dips,
Desiring my desirous lips,
And that ineffable delight
When souls turn bodies, and unite
In the intolerable, the whole
Rapture of the embodied soul.

But even this poem, as can be seen at once, is scarcely very adventurous in terms of contemporary modernity. Perhaps the highest point of sexual candour in that decade was achieved in John Gray's poem, "The Barber," in which, as in the stanza that follows, sex becomes not only "fleshly" but most definitely physical:

The dream grew vague, I molded with my hand
The mobile breasts, the valley; and the waist
I touched; and pigments reverently placed
Upon their thighs in sapient spots and stains
Beryls and chrysolites and diaphanes,
And gems whose hot harsh names are never said.
I was a masseur; and my fingers bled
With wonder as I touched their awful limbs.

Between the 1890's and the World War little further advance was made in the modern direction. Indeed, for a while there seemed to be a setback, especially after the spirit of the 90's began to lose force and sway. The World

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War, however, put an end to the old conceptions and traditions, and ever since its occurrence something of the same freedom which has crept into the novel and drama has now become part of the new poetic outlook. Extending from the serious verse of Conrad Aiken to the light and frivolous doggerel of Dorothy Parker, this new sexual freedom has become a pervasive force. The love lyrics of Shelley with his "desire of the moth for the star," the cry of Byron to the Maid of Athens, "give, oh, give me back my heart," or even the confession of Swinburne that his "love made his blood burn and swoon" seem like antiquated recollections, verbal relics, when compared with the love poetry of today.

The fundamental difference between the love poetry of Shelley, Byron, and Swinburne, and Edna St. Vincent Millay, Arthur Davison Ficke, and Donald Evans is to be found in the emphasis of the former group upon love as a romantic and ethereal emotion and the emphasis of the latter group upon love as a realistic, physical fact. To the nineteenth century romantics love was a sacred thing, an idealized abstraction. To think of it as a physical reality, a sexual experience, would have been in their eyes to pollute and prostitute it. To the twentieth century poets, on the other hand, the physical reality of love evokes no horrors. They are as calm in the face of the sexual substance of love as they are in the face of the spiritual aspects of the soul. Their attitude is epitomized excellently in these lines of Robinson Jeffers:

There is nothing wicked, nothing strange in the world. What the heart
desires, or any part of the body,
That is the law. The God of the stars has taken his hand out of the
laws and has dropped them empty
As you draw your hand out of a glove.

It is not surprising at all, therefore, that Donald Evans should write one of his best lyrics about the menstrual period of a woman in love—a theme which would have

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terrified the nineteenth century mind, and which would not have suggested itself even to Shelley and Byron, who, despite the recalcitrancy of their natures, would never have contemplated sex in such a physical way.

Edna St. Vincent Millay has communicated this new sexual attitude in more effective verse than perhaps any other poet in this age. In the following poem we discover her combating the romantic notion of everlasting love, and in her last line coming to grips with the simple biology of the matter:

I shall forget you presently, my dear,
So make the most of this your little day,
Your little month, your little half a year,
Ere I forget, or die, or move away,
And we are done forever; by and by
I shall forget you, as I said, but now,
If you entreat me with your loveliest lie
I shall protest you with my favorite vow.
I would indeed that love were longer-lived,
And oaths were not so brittle as they are,
But so it is, and nature has contrived
To struggle on without a break thus far,
Whether or not we find what we are seeking
Is idle, biologically speaking.

Robinson Jeffers has gone further than Miss Millay in extremity of sexual description, and in "Roan Stallion," which we cited before, he has introduced sodomy into contemporary verse. Conrad Aiken has ventured into the new field of sex with all the spirit of a modern, and has illuminated it with psychologic insight and penetration. Aldous Huxley's poem on the "Fifth Philosopher's Song" belongs to this same tradition. To appreciate the difference between the old and the new attitude toward sex in poetry, all one would have to do would be to visualize Alfred Lord Tennyson reading these lines of Huxley:

A million million spermatozoa,
All of them alive

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Out of that cataclysm but one poor Noah
Dare hope to survive.

And among that billion minus one
Might not chance to be
Shakespeare, another Newton, a new Donne
But the One was me.

With the exception of such vestigial poets as Lizette Reese and Sara Teasdale, there is scarcely a poet today who has not been influenced by the new sex attitude which has invaded modern poetry and modern life.

In summary, then, we can say that there is no question but that literature has undergone a profound change in its attitude toward, and its expression of, sex in the last generation. Every form of literature has been affected by it: poetry, drama, and novel. The sublimated love-motif of the nineteenth century has given way to the unrepressed sex-motif of the twentieth. The twentieth century author's approach to the problem of conduct has become realistic instead of romantic. Release rather than renunciation has become his new sexual solution. In candour of language he has come closer to Rabelais and Shakespeare than to Thackeray and Browning. In a word, he has come to embody a new philosophy of life.

Chapter Two

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MODERN POETRY

by HENRY MORTON ROBINSON

.....

IT IS nothing very new or daring to suggest that a poet is a person who diverts the normally heterosexual reality-impulse into a special, synthetic reality of his own—a reality compacted of selective perfections and satisfactions not directly attainable by other men. This theory has its opponents, but I do not know that there is, at the present time, any other theory of the genesis of art receiving the slightest attention from persons competent to investigate such matters.

To discuss the presence of sexual energy in poetry is, then, to discuss the presence of salt in sea water. Both discussions would be equally original and equally beside the point. But with such straw debate we need not greatly concern ourselves. Instead, our problem crystallizes into the far more interesting question: "Is modern poetry utilizing fully and naturally the store of sexual energy at its disposal?"

Quite bluntly, modern poetry is not. That there exists a serious blockage between our poetry and its reservoir of sexual energy—a blockage resulting in the creative languor, and more noticeably, the melancholy puzzlement of our chief poets—is a comment that any frank tongue must

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immediately make. And I would emphasize the term “melancholy puzzlement” because this seems to be the only term that can describe the hesitation, the pathetic sense of self-inadequacy, and the tentative solutions of such poets as have become aware of the modern problem in poetry. If “chaos” were not so connotative of abundant energy running wild, I should apply it to the situation; indeed, Mr. Houston Peterson has already indicated it in the title of his excellent study of Conrad Aiken, *The Melody of Chaos*. But chaos seems too vigorous a word for the saddish tincture of perplexity that colours our poetry. One has the feeling that our poets are suffering from acute melancholia, rather than from a head-on collision with a dynamic force. To be split wide open by a seismic shock is one thing, but to huddle in the ruins of a deserted temple is quite another. And I somehow feel that the contemporary wringing of poetic hands takes place amid the ashes of a ruined altar rather than in the wake of an avalanche.

This melancholy is not, however, confined to poetry. It permeates those most impermeable of social armadillos—religion and economics—and hangs like a weary dream over our education, love, and art. The shadows that wrap our poets in the ceremonials of defeat are the shadows that dog us through the high noon and the public thoroughfares of our lives. For the anomaly of modern poetry is the anomaly of modern life—that whereas both are richly motivated and dowered by sexual energy, the essential nature and psychic implications of this energy have been faultily estimated and timidly applied. I say “psychic implications,” mind you, and have no reference to the flood of physiological twaddle that gushes into our ken from all sides. Such elementary advice is of course necessary, and *What a Young Man Should Know* is indeed an apt title for the primer containing such advice. But I have yet to see a work entitled *What a Man* (i.e., a mature psyche) *Should Know*. Yet until such a volume—treating of the

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basic psychological relations between men and women, men and society, men and art—becomes the handbook of poets and society, both will continue to flounder in the deepening furrows of melancholy and defeat.

The problem of freeing poetry and life from the gloomy bonds that cramp them, the task of neutralizing the psychic poisons that are corroding art and society—these are matters that I can barely indicate in this paper. But even before any positive indication is attempted, the ground must be cleared of hampering underbrush—the choking débris of centuries. Without further delay let us make an assault upon the rank, dense, and bewildering jungle of Romanticism, a clustering growth which has, more than any single obstruction, impeded the development of modern poetry and love.

II

Literary Romanticism thrusts man into the past. Traditionally, it has always advocated a *return* to something—a Golden Age, a Garden of Eden, a Walden Pond, a Tintern Abbey, or a condition of noble savagery. Somewhere in the distant past (promises Romanticism) Man will find a perfect model of happiness; let him imitate this model as closely as possible—let him be as simple, as pure, as natural, as undeveloped as he could be—let him fly far from the madding crowd of competitive existence and contaminating reality—and the Golden Age would speedily revisit these disjointed glimpses of the moon. This much is thrice familiar to us. The histories of literature and the pages of dead poets are full of formulas for getting back to the happy land of pristine innocence. Shorn, then, of its accidental features, Romanticism may be defined as an overwhelming desire on the part of men to flee this world's reality and return to an earlier, idealized state of being.

How does this romantic urge affect the individual? Why, it thrusts him back into his own past, deep into the golden

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age of his departed childhood. "Heaven," says Wordsworth, "lies about us in our infancy"—and the poetry of ten thousand minor romanticists re-echoes the nostalgic wail for the lost Eden of their childhood. And understandably so! As children, the blanket of mother love wrapped them in a warm protective mantle, and effectively shielded them from the slings and darts of competitive existence. Then if ever was it sweet to live! The warmth of that unearned mother flood on which we floated so peacefully causes childhood to seem, in the perspective of buffeting years, the happiest era of our mortality, a haven to which we would gladly run (and do run in desire) for comfort and protection.

But the impossibility of actually getting back to this sheltered and gratuitously-loved state fills us with self-pity even in contemplation. We weep for our innocent dead selves; we hymn the lost purity and the peace that characterized the actors in that early mother-and-child drama. We become, in a word, Romanticists, or—in another word—children. We return, consciously or unconsciously, to the golden age of our first and greatest happiness—and in doing so deliberately surrender our chances of ever growing up!

This desperate longing to revisit the past is the basis of romantic love. It is the basis not only of the immature sex relationship that characterizes our modern life, but the pathological starting-point of all poetry dealing with that relationship. For the poet, who of all persons is most loath to leave his childhood behind him, finds himself endowed with powers of substitution amounting almost to legerdemain. In his desire to perpetuate childhood, he shifts the persons and properties of the childhood drama in a fine substitutive fury that fools everyone, including himself. Preserving in desire the original relationship between the mother and the child, he cunningly masks his characters with the titles "Lover" and "Beloved," and is happy only

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when he can swing back in a completely successful circle to the consummation of his first innocently incestuous passion. Winning this happiness upon or through the person of the mother substitute, he proclaims his happiness in a certain number of lines—and one more romantic poem is thrust forth, unswaddled, into an overpopulated world. If he is unsuccessful in his suit (or even, as we shall see, if he is successful) his actual failure to win the mother smites him fearfully, and from his consequent dejection arises a poem of protest, disillusionment, and futility.

The dominant note in modern poetry is the utterance of this futility—the futility of romantic, substitutive love to satisfy the psychic needs of men.

The most distinguished poets of our age are in the grip of this malady. Conversely, no poet of importance is free of it. And syllogistically, no person who is free of it is important. There are, to be sure, thousands of sweet singers—chiefly female—who have no notion of the struggle that the male soul is making, and must make, to free itself from the dead, white, mother hand. But they do not matter, any more than clucking hens matter when an eagle seizes one of their chickens. The great poets themselves are only partially aware of their predicament. They know that they are lonely; spitted on the peaks of their own loneliness, they turn pathetically to romantic love for sustaining strength. But even from the granting of that love they derive small sustenance, receiving but an imperfect answer to their query of despair. In the opening lines of Witter Bynner's "Eden Tree" is found a full statement of the illness, its cause, and its symptoms:

Let the book open, let the page attest
Which man is loneliest.
Although the day
Shine sharp and hold its head high
Among the mountains, compare your lives and say
Which one is loneliest.

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In almost the next lines Mr. Bynner indicates the reason of his loneliness:

You died and left me, Celia, long ago
And it was better so.
I had leaned my head too well upon your breast
Thought I could rest
Upon other rest encountered than my own.
The world crumbled, the outer world fell apart
But not your heart.
Like a child I held it for my sustenance
And joy.
I was still a boy.
In a trance
I clung to a breast, the milk of imagining.

This is the very poetry of the thing I have been pounding at in dull enough prose. It is the fundamental romantic posture—the child seeking comfort at the mother's breast. But the failure of this infantile dependence to give satisfaction to the mature man is mirrored in the next lines of the poem:

But I,
Growing, growing,
Pushed it away at last with my hands. . . .

I was behind myself watching, I was out of hand,
Unmanageable at source,
I was an appearance only,
I was lonely.

This is the theme and fugue of "Eden Tree." If it were the only poem of its kind, one might accuse Mr. Bynner of being "neurotic" or something monstrously abnormal in the world of men. But the author of "Eden Tree" is only one voice crying in a world made irreparably desert by the failure of romantic love. Other poets, notably Conrad Aiken and T. S. Eliot, make Mr. Bynner seem by contrast a merry singer, for "Eden Tree" ultimately develops a fairly cheerful philosophy of stoicism, attained by travelling inward

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to the centre of one's being. But for Conrad Aiken there is apparently no such recourse. When romantic love fails, or is impotent even in its perfection to assuage the pain of loneliness, nothing remains but nothingness. The opening lines of "The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones" describe Mr. Aiken's barren universe, and are a perfect echo of the Time Voice hovering over our world.

It is a shabby backdrop of bright stars:
One of the small interstices of time:
the worn out north star northward, and Orion
to westward spread in ruined light. Eastward
the other stars disposed,—or indisposed;—
x-ward or y-ward, the sick sun inflamed;
and all his drunken planets growing pale.
We watch them, and our watching is this hour.

It is a stage of ether, without space,—
a space of limbo without time,—
a faceless clock that never strikes;

And it is bloodstream at its priestlike task,—
the indeterminate and determined heart,
that beats, and beats, and does not know it beats.

Here the dark synapse between nerve and nerve;
the void, between two atoms in the brain;
darkness, without term or form, that sinks
between two thoughts.

Here we have sounded, angel!—
O angel soul, O memory of man!—
And felt the nothing that sustains our wings.

Such music moves toward the very nadir of despair in an orchestral crash of futility and sets black echoes rattling among the crumbled pillars of hope. It is, you will agree, a sincere and appealing lament; but you will also agree that it is scarcely the cry of a strong man about to run a race, or a bridegroom entering his chamber. Rather, it is the plaint of a lost and puzzled soul whose world is most un-

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profitable and stale. I believe it to be the cry of the disillusioned romanticist (i.e., the child-that-has-lost-its-mother) who can find no other object worth his constancy or interest.

One more point, and the presentation of the case is over: Our poets are not only disillusioned, they are disgusted. Not even the mediæval Chrysostom, sick with unnatural loathing of his earthly husk, can match Aiken's disgust at the spectacle of the human body:

Foulest, foulest, foulest,
digester of filth, excreter of filth,
unwashed effluvium of this rotting world,
sickly beginning and more sickly end,
cut out that natural heart that beats your blood
And with it shed your life.

Less morbid, but by no means less sinister is T. S. Eliot's

Wipe your hand across your mouth and laugh:
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

or Baudelaire's

Seigneur, donnez-moi le force et le courage
De contempler mon corps sans dégoût.

What are we to make of this torrent of self-loathing that pours from the lips of modern poetry? Contemplating the emotion of disgust, we find it to be a phase of *guilt*—a species of horror that the incestuous wish for the mother should persist with such alarming poignancy under the guise of romantic love. Mixed with this horror is the shame of the soul that cannot free itself from this infantile relation to woman. There is another relation, a mature relation, dimly suspected and distantly perceived, towards which the tortured psyche moves in agony. But even as he struggles against the incubus of romantic love he realizes that he has not yet acquired sufficient strength to slay the

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enemy. He suffers a partial or complete relapse, and breaks into a fury of disgust at his own weakness and degradation.

The charge may be brought: "You have quoted only lyric poets; such souls are always in a ferment of neurotic desolation." Very well then, gaze upon the sturdiest of our objective, narrative poets, Mr. E. A. Robinson. Nothing could be more romantically pitiful than the gallery of failures, flaws, and vain strugglers that Mr. Robinson depicts—a gallery ranging from the dry-point elegance of the man Flammonde and the urbane Richard Cory, to the darker oils of "The Man Who Died Twice" and "The Glory of the Nightingales." In the collected works of Mr. Robinson, one seeks in vain for a tinted line or an optimistic character. His heroes are shaded, sick—sick with the peculiar sexual malady of our age.

The poets I have adduced in proof of my thesis are, strangely enough, no longer young men. If they were callow striplings, green in love, setting down turgid lines during that first rebound from puberty, one might dispossess them as speakers of the age and nullify their utterance with the comment, "Young, still young." But these poets are no longer young; they are (with the exception of Mr. Aiken) all over fifty. They are not fledglings; they have tasted life for half a century, and the longer they taste the flatter it gets. For them at least, the salt of romantic love has undeniably lost its savour. The testimony of such men is peculiarly valid, both by reason of their age and their introspective genius. They are in reality the Nestors of our psychological councils; they speak with savage clarity of the disease they feel to be at the heart of our society. They are the Jeremiahs of a maladjusted world—and the unanimous evidence of their poetry reveals a condition that must be noted and corrected before the sentient portion of the world settles down into a condition of acute melancholia.

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But it will be asked, "Why attribute our present melancholy to the failure of romantic love?" Why? Simply because there is no other reason weighty enough to account for such dejection, no other failure that could wring from the human heart such accents of desolation. God has failed men frequently enough in the history of this world, but the only result has been a stiffening of man's spiritual spine, or a faltering acknowledgment that, since His ways are inscrutable, everything will be righted in Heaven. (This is in itself a kind of Romanticism, closely connected with a childhood trust in the omnipotence of the father.) Logic and Science have failed men too, notably in the instances of democracy and justice. But these things are bearable because they do not entirely isolate us from our origin; *they do not irrevocably seal the door of the womb—that mysterious gate by which all men hope to regain paradise!* For the promise of romantic love in this: "In a world of loneliness I offer the only means of sharing loneliness with another. I am the flaming river between mortals; in my commingling heat two selves may for a little space of time burn away their selfhood." "Ah, love," says Arnold,

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarm of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold wrote these lines sixty-five years ago, and was sufficiently contaminated by Browning to believe that romantic love would keep God in his heaven and would ultimately make everything all right with the world. But that illusion is not possible to our contemporary poets. By repeated trial and failure they have found the romantic

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myth totally unsatisfying; the Romantic Rose has faded,
the sedge withers by the lake, and no birds sing.

A melancholy scene i' truth!

III

I have spoken thus far solely of the poetry of men. What of the other half of the psychic bilobate—the poetry of women? Does the utterance of the female bolster, or destroy, the gloomy barracks in which male poets dwell? Are women poets conscious of the failure of romantic love? Would they change it if they could? And have they any essentially female solution to the romantic problem?

Observers of poetic phenomena in the United States will agree that of any thousand poems written (not necessarily published) in our tongue, at least nine hundred are produced by women. The quantity of female poetry produced in America is astounding; its quality is—how shall I express it?—paralysingly poor. Both facts are valuable to our scrutiny. The fact that I, as editor of a small poetry magazine, used to receive nearly two hundred poems a day in the mails—of which an unchanging ninety per cent were written by women—might indicate that there is a vast amount of erotic substitution taking place among the women of America. As to whether this substitution was voluntary or enforced, I don't know. I can only say that most of the poems were written by married women between the ages of forty and fifty, who generally accompanied their poems with letters announcing more or less obliquely the utter failure of their love-lives. Of the thousands of poems received, I do not recall a single one that was not concerned with the idealization of romantic love—either its success or failure—in some form not too remote for instant recognition. With the quality of the poems we need not now concern ourselves; their subject matter and point of view are the points I wish to discuss. Significantly, although all the poems were about romantic love, there were no protests

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or complaints about the institution itself. Although most of the women were unhappy, it never occurred to them that the false sex relation of romantic love was responsible for their unhappiness. Diligently they canvassed their inner state (or what they thought should be their inner state), compared it with the marital facts surrounding them, and either lamented their personally unfortunate plight or fused it into a dream of ideal love under ideal circumstances—somewhere else, a long way off, in the future, in the past—in fact, anywhere and anytime but the actual here and now. And after reading enough of these poems I began to realize that if the romantic ideal had not filled their souls with the cosmic nostalgia of the male, it had certainly brought them no great amount of actual happiness.

These women did not realize that the notion of romantic love was an empty phial from which the last drop of value and service had long been drained. They felt vaguely that the man-made notion of romantic love had been of tremendous service to their sex, elevating them through a period of centuries from a servile position to one of dominance, from chattel slavery to pedestalized deity. They were eager, naturally, to preserve the advantages thus gained. But they failed to see that romantic love had really run its term, that the old formula had died on them. They were satisfied to invoke it again and again, to make its cracked crystal cup the measure of all being, to drink wilfully of the faded liquor, and to suffer psychic retardation in the name of a childish myth.

If the sins of Romanticism were confined to a million inconsequential verse writers, who would care? But when the most gifted female poet of our time chooses to describe in romantical terms the fearful ravages that the blind bow-boy has visited upon her—then the fallacy begins to take hold. What a powerful incentive to unreality, what a pretty falsification of actuality occurs in the twenty-sixth

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sonnet of Miss Millay's *Fatal Interview*. After reading this and other sonnets of the sequence, female readers grow positively miserable unless they can possess for themselves a chunk of love's precious ambergris that floats only on the perfumed wave of romantic love. The sonnet:

Women have loved before as I love now;
At least, in lively chronicles of the past—
Of Irish waters by a Cornish prow
Of Trojan waters by a Spartan mast
Much to their cost invaded—here and there,
Hunting the amorous line, skimming the rest,
I find some woman bearing as I bear
Love like a burning city in the breast.
I think however that of all alive
I only in such utter, ancient way
Do suffer love; in me alone survive
The unregenerate passions of a day
When treacherous queens, with death upon the tread,
Heedless and wilful, took their knights to bed.

Here indeed is a revarnishing of the Provençal fable, a heedless and wilful bedding-down with a sixteenth century myth! I suspect Miss Millay knows better, and in her quaint Elizabethan way is keeping one jump ahead of her imitators. But it does seem a trifle absurd that Miss Millay, who should know the truth about love, should choose to depict it like something out of "Endymion," only not so grassy. If she is hoaxing us—all right. But if she means it, then she is taking her place alongside, and only a little above, a million other married women who pluck their sentimental nosegays while being supported by a race of baffled and bewildered husbands.

IV

I have been trying to show that the house of poetry is divided against itself on the question of romantic love. Apparently the men no longer find it satisfying, while the women seem to see in it the supreme and final expression

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of the human heart. This cleavage extends far beyond the borders of poetry and cuts deeply athwart the institutions of marriage and the family. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that the continuance of this romantic cleavage will bring society—as it has brought poetry—to a dead end of melancholy and defeat.

Such a statement will be challenged by millions of persons not actively engaged in the production or consumption of poetry. In fact, my statement is *being* challenged daily, along the border-line of reality where plain men and women are meeting constantly in the not necessarily fatal interview of sex. Life has a perverse tendency to be pragmatic about this sexual commerce, and has resisted with fair success the ravages of the romantic ideal.

I say “fair success.” But the prospect for continuance or extension of this success is not encouraging. As the irritable tribe of poets grows more numerous and more articulate, their laments (on the male side) and ecstasies (on the female) will fall with increasing volume on the general ear. This thick and calloused organ knows a seismic disturbance when it hears one; in fact, vague rumblings are already warning it that all is not well. How can one interpret the rising divorce and suicide curves? To what shall we attribute the startling increase in insanity and widespread neurotic disorders? There exists small doubt in the minds of psychiatrists that a profound sexual maladjustment, splitting society from top to bottom, is the basic cause of our contemporary neurasthenia. And that maladjustment, of which our chief poets are the murmuring symptoms, is traceable to our persistently infantile conception of romantic love.

But what other kind of love exists?

I wish I knew. I wish I could erect on the ruined, dismal stones of Romanticism a towering altar to the strong new love. I wish I could supply in rich detail a description of the edifice toward which the eyes of poets are straining.

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But I cannot. I only know that this love rests firmly upon mature psychical foundations, free of the ancient buttresses of mother worship, troubadour fiction, and queen-beeism. It is not less sexual, it is not less erotic; it is an almost intangible declaration of mutual need, without illusion as to the nature, permanence, or function of that need. Such love is possible only between grown men and women who have learned to stop hankering for childish things—for the love of the mother, for the ivory tower of onanism, for the protected quiescence of sleep. I admit that the relationship is rare now, and never will be common. But it should be attainable, if at all, by the poets of the coming age.

For an alternative faces the poets of today and tomorrow. Either they can succumb to the sterile, melancholy tradition of Romanticism or—and here is the hope—they can lead the world toward a new organization of its sexual energy. What that regeneration will be is partially apparent to anyone who has observed the *actuality* of modern sex relationship at its best. In such cases (and I have occasionally seen them in life) a current of coequal intensity flashes between the two sexual poles. There is no mother, there is no son; there is no wilful queen, no Lancelot in armour; there is no pedestalized deity, no dim incense, no rose window. There is only energy, seeking mutual renewal and lodgment in the persons between whom the energy flows. And this energy is sexual rather than erotic—the whole circle on the whole circle, rather than a segment covering an erotic arc. For I can imagine sex to mean, in poetry and love, the fullest and most diversified use of male and female energies. Erotic love employs but a fraction of this energy. The greatest erotic love the world ever heard of (and I don't care whether you adduce Paolo and Francesca or Frankie and Johnnie as your example) used only a small portion of the potential energies of the persons involved. And it is in this idea of using one's full poten-

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tialities (after freeing them from idle yearning and sick attachment to things past) that I find the future hope of love and poetry. For melancholy cannot enter where use fulfills; disgust is not possible where use is triumphant. Knights are not needed where *use* absorbs the full energies of life and poetry, divorced from obsolete romantic cant.

For a partial example of what poetry can be when it employs the full flood of sexuality, untainted by eroticism, I point to *The Trojan Women* of Euripides or Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. These poems are so impregnated with sexual energy that they literally cannot die. Here is no melancholy trifling with individual sorrows; nothing less than mortal destiny is involved. Here is no sighing for past love; here is a tragic grapple with present reality. Here, in brief, is maturity. Now I do not mean that our modern poets should set about imitating classic Greek models, but I do suggest that there have been times and places in the world when the sexual impulse, deflected and reorganized as it must always be in art, gave rise to something more interesting and more powerful than the sad twilight sonnets of David Morton or the literary nymphomania of Dorothy Parker.

I believe that Romanticism made a definite contribution to world progress by elevating woman to a plane of coequality with her mate. But the beneficial aspects of the movement have long been exhausted, and we are now in the sick backwash of a stagnant tide. Riding this tide, poetry and love grow greenly ill. Both are conscious of their futility; both wish for the open sea of a new relation and a new use. Unless they head for this open sea, there is no place else for them to go. Either they can rock themselves into further agonies of *mal de mer*—or they can decide to grow up, abandon the harbour of mother love, and row boldly forth upon the stormy ocean of use and maturity.

Chapter Three

MODERN FICTION

by JOHN COWPER POWYS

THERE is no doubt that among the many characteristics peculiar to our age what might be called the Emancipating of Sex is one of the most arresting. On all sides this phenomenon manifests itself, to the delight of progressive and radical minds and to the dismay of the old-fashioned; and what we see around us in our modern Western world is now reflected, concentrated, exaggerated in our younger authors.

The flood of Sex Liberation is indeed mounting so high, especially in the larger and more cosmopolitan cities, that these younger writers, represented in America by such names as Hecht, Faulkner, Wolfe, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Herrman, Margery Latimer, Cummings, Hughes, Josephine Herbst, Eliot Paul, have moved on so fast and have left so much behind, that today, in comparison with these, our older sex writers, such as James Branch Cabell and Sherwood Anderson, seem to belong to an epoch that has quite passed away.

Wherein lies the difference between these younger writers who reflect, like gleaming iridescent bubbles, the chaotic tide of our modern sex-life and such weighty picturesque and self-conscious eroticists as Cabell and Anderson?

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It would seem as if a certain quality, common to so completely opposite types of genius as Cabell and Anderson, had totally disappeared, a quality that might be defined as "Sex-freedom Propaganda." These two vigorously self-conscious writers convey a constant impression of their lively awareness of the "enemy," that is, of the conservative weight of opposition to their daring sex cult; whereas this younger, newer school, much more objective in its method, seems to take the new freedom for granted, and putting aside any personal pose, swims, floats, and treads water in the new element, as if it were all there were.

One is conscious, too, that with the disappearance of definite sex propaganda, the sex-life of the individual is no longer a part of any *positive philosophy*; it is simply an integral portion of the general chaos, of the general disorder, conferring no particular distinction, any more than it incurs any particular blame, but just existing there, as the proper and natural subject for art. Ten years ago, even five years ago, so fast is the tide moving, a young collegiate student might feel he could mould his life in imitation of the "philosophy" of Cabell or of Anderson; but among these new writers, with their passionate and cynical objectivism, with their irresponsible *voyeur* attitude, it would be singularly hard to unearth any "philosophy" to imitate.

It would almost seem as though two magnetic currents—whether consciously received or not—one coming from the "man-in-mass" cult of the new Russia and one from the *sur-réaliste* cult of the new France were invisibly at work, obliterating the old individualistic poses as so much pompous and priggish supercargo, and encouraging the new writers to plunge more and more boldly into their hypnotizing milieu of mechanical chaos, full of the bizarre débris of modern city life, with its under-tide of formless pathological emotion, seething and fermenting in its criss-cross anarchical confusion.

Intensely interesting as this new school is, it cannot be

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said that any of its exponents have *as yet* towered up above the rest as figures of overmastering individual talent; and it is for this reason that it seems better to concentrate our attention upon the four great modern writers whose influence *can* be estimated in terms of personal character and genius. These are Proust, Joyce, Dreiser, and Lawrence; and among them it is clear that it is Joyce and Lawrence, rather than Proust or Dreiser, who are the masters of our younger contemporaries.

PROUST

Compared with the prestige of Proust as a genius of the first water, compared with the extraordinary pleasure with which all the sophisticated of our time delve into his immense work, it is singular what little influence he has had over our literary epoch and how few writers imitate him.

This seems due to the fact that, as an artist, the full and rounded impact of his work requires such a strain to compass and such a stretch of time to appropriate. For writers of weaker wing and briefer flight the huge life-scape of his envisaging is too big to grasp. Joyce's vision is comparatively a static one; not immobile, but whirling round and round in a fathomless and towering vortex, whirlpool and waterspout together. But Proust's characters need a lifetime to develop and to grow in. His method demands not only space, but time; time, indeed, might be called his chief metaphysical protagonist.

And this exigency in the substance of his art, this need for the unrolling of the time-folio, affects his whole handling of sex. Normal sex relations—the love affairs of the young Marcel and the mature Monsieur Swann—are envisaged in their dynamic character; and the effect of the passing of time upon them creates the psychological burden of their story. And if this is true of the normal sex affairs of the book, it is not less true of the perverse and abnormal

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ones. The Baron de Charlus's feeling for the musician Morel changes with the same chances and accidents of time that change the character of Morel himself; while the grand example of the effect of time is the gradual manner in which Saint-Loup, Charlus's nephew, realizes the full extent of his own abnormality.

If Joyce—though fully acquainted with the Freudian and Jungian theories—is capable of constructing his own original psychoanalysis, Proust, with a much stronger scientific bias, links up his erotic *aperçus* with his general social clairvoyance. Both these things, however, his social revelations and his erotic discoveries, are subordinated in his general scheme to that exciting Platonic speculation—the nourishment of the undying timeless ego, the Eternal Being in us, as it feeds upon such little isolated episodes, as the taste of the *madeleine* dipped in the infusion of camomile tea, or the tinkle of the railway men's hammers, or the unevenness of the steps in the Piazza San Marco—which does not attain its complete realization until the last two volumes of the whole work, so that the ultimate essence of Proust's vision, in true Platonic manner, rises from the love of one beautiful person to the love of many beautiful people, and from the love of many beautiful people to the love of the beauty of the “institution” of humanity itself, losing itself finally in that love of the Timeless Absolute which is revealed to the ego from its casual and chance-flung encounters with certain quite arbitrary evocations of the senses.

Although there does emerge—though only at the last, and from a contemplation of a huge accumulation of outward memories, pulverized in spots by this lifting up of the buried head of the Timeless Ego—from the whole time-landscape of Proust a sublime æsthetic unity, yet incidentally, as we follow him along his wavering, retarding, and winding road, what we are most aware of is not so much an æsthetic glamour, as a purely scientific or natural-

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ist curiosity, the constant tickling of our discovery-nerve and the satisfaction of our craving for induced generalizations. No more than with Joyce himself is the Old Adam in us, the naughty itch for libidinous gloatings over voluptuous images, pandered to in Proust. Here is a cold-blooded, unscrupulous, although velvet-gloved, explorer, carrying us shamelessly along with him through every convolution of normal passion and jealousy, and every inverted twist of abnormal and perverse obsession.

That felicitous metaphor of the Aquarium, when the outsiders at Balbec-on-Sea peer in at the privileged habitués through the big glass windows; that still more felicitous metaphor, drawn from the fertilizations and sterilities of vegetation in a conservatory, which he uses when his young hero—no honourable Anglo-Saxon gentleman when scientific curiosity is aroused!—peeps and eavesdrops so unpardonably at the curious “botanic” loves of the Baron and the afterwards devoted and faithful Jupien, are beautiful examples of how Proust’s attitude to the phenomena of social life *includes* its sex urges and its sex aberrations as elements, but only as elements, in the general psychology of our race. No more perfect instance could be found as to how remote from sharing the morbid excitement of his “subject” Proust is than those extraordinary scenes, *chez Jupien*, in the midst of the bombardment of Paris, when the monstrous and dreamlike masochism of Monsieur de Charlus is humoured by his hired “assassins.”

There are certain modern writers, who, in their sadistic passages, clearly, and quite obviously, are thrilled with morbid excitement—and doubtless such writers’ excitement, under given conditions, communicates itself to the reader; until there comes to be so many more sadistic vibrations abroad in the world than there were before, a consummation thoroughly satisfactory to the Devils of Hell but giving no pleasure to the Divine Muse.

From no official scientific explorer of the perversities of

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the erotic nerve can more be learned of its fantastic aberrations than from this huge work of Proust; and it is not only the aberrations of the abnormal that he reveals so patiently, it is also the aberrations—and they are scarcely less strange—of the normal affairs of love.

There is no doubt that not nearly enough has been written with regard to the difference between the erotic emotions of a Frenchman and an Englishman, or between those of an Englishman and an American; and it is natural for an Anglo-Saxon reader not only to be startled by the cold-blooded manner in which Proust conducts his microscopic analysis, but to refuse to accept his conclusions. Where is there a place, where is there the smallest niche, left when Proust has finished his exposé of the power of time over love and of jealousy over love and of the bargaining spirit—nothing for nothing and tit for tat!—over love, where is there the least cranny left in this compact psychic edifice of “pros and cons,” for the kind of Quixotic devotion, tender and enduring in time’s despite, that is so often taken for granted as an erotic characteristic by that archæsthete, Henry James, for whom—

Love is not Love
That alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove?

There is a persistent rumour abroad among Proust-readers that the original of Albertine, the hero’s girl-mistress, was a boy and that if we look closely we can find boyish traits in this beguiling and charming young creature. The evidence for this view does not by any means seem convincing. Proust himself protests quite emphatically in *La Temps Retrouvé* against this search for “originals.” “*Dans ce livre,*” he says, “*ou il n'y a pas un seul fait qui ne soit fictif, ou il n'y a pas un seul personnage ‘à clefs,’ ou tout a été inventé par moi selon les besoins de ma démonstration.*”

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And apart from this question of *personnages "a clefs,"* it would seem no very difficult task to point to passages in which the girlishness of this young girl is unmistakably indicated.

Would a boy, for example, be so subtle in the malice of his rebellion as deliberately to open the window—not of the invalid's room but of an adjoining room—in order to challenge the rule of the house which was against fresh air?

And, moreover, in those scenes of Lesbian attraction which cause the young Marcel such acute anguish, it would become a veritable Cretan maze of moral convolutions if we were teased into trying to visualize a boy Albert in place of the girl Albertine. No, No! The wiser part is to take this interesting character, as Proust evidently means us to take her, as an indication of how this perversity in a young woman, so much less destructive to herself and others than the corresponding perversity in Saint-Loup, allows her full scope and latitude to be genuinely attached and really emotionally attached to an extremely exacting young man.

In other words, we learn from Proust that not only do many sexual perversities develop late in life, but that there are many people—among both men and women—who are authentically attracted to both sexes equally.

If there are in Proust, from the Anglo-Saxon point of view, certain rigid limitations to the nature of love, within these limitations there is no doubt that few modern writers have gone further or deeper than he in analysing the whimsies and caprices of love when its sufferings and raptures are at their height. *The associative imagination* is the thing that Proust disentangles most clearly from other erotic feelings, showing how any remote word, or object, or institution, or train of thought—however dull in itself—which in our own mind can be associated with the desired object, stirs up in us a thrilling, quivering, melting feeling, a peculiar sensation in the pit of our stomach, such as

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does not always or by any means inevitably seize upon us in the loved one's actual presence.

By describing along parallel lines Swann's love for Odette and the little Marcel's love for Gilberte, Odette's daughter, Proust compels us to note how the mental absorption with the image of his mistress which obsesses Swann at all the great gatherings to which he has the entrée, particularly when he hears "the little phrase" from Vinteuil's Sonata, is paralleled by the mental absorption of the young Marcel at his parents' table and the delicious agitation with which he tries to lure them into merely mentioning the name "Swann."

It is in all these fleeting, floating, gliding leaves and straws upon the wind, in our emotional reactions to the most normal loves, that Proust is so consummate a master. Not a leaf stirs in this world of romantic illusion, not a straw blows by, but he catches it upon its mysterious way and makes of it a subject for some penetrating and exciting generalization.

Why is it that sophisticated readers whose refinement of perception and fastidious sensitivity are so shocked and outraged by Joyce and his followers turn to Proust with such relief?

The truth seems to be that Proust is really—alone in our generation—consciously dealing with that margin of emotional memories such as places remembered, strains of music recalled, odours of flowers, childish ecstasies, glimpses on balconies, winds in trees, old bits of masonry under certain lights, which if they do not quite amount to poetry and romance undoubtedly play upon the feelings of human beings in the happy or unhappy experience of a love affair, but which are conspicuous by their absence in the treatment of sex-life in modern literature.

It is true he is dealing with all this in a cold-blooded analytical way, but he is passionately preoccupied with it. It really affords the great mass of his subject matter; and

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he never throws it all overboard in one contemptuous gesture, as most modern writers do.

Like Cervantes, dealing with romantic chivalry in order to lay bare its crazy aberrations, Proust is himself profoundly preoccupied with the romance he dissects. His subject is no more nor less than the "illusion" of sex; and although he subjects this illusion to the most penetrating analysis it has ever received, it remains that it is the illusion of sex which interests him more than anything else. That Proust stands completely apart from the general literary fashion of our age in sex matters can be proved by noting how carefully he avoids the two extremes of glamour-killing which our contemporaries delight to practise—those two savage *coups de grace* by which sex glamour is slain and by which the glamorous dream-life of the lover is annihilated and the enamoured "psyche" humbled, reduced, converted to a hollow husk, pricked in fact by the bodkin-point, till, like a child's exploded balloon, it can be picked up between finger and thumb. These two extreme ways of reducing the glamour-illusion of the enamoured "psyche" are *first*, psychoanalysis, which accounts for everything in terms of the demonic Unconscious; and *second*, physiology, which brings down the dream-world of love to the brutal level of stark hidebare fornication.

Now it is very noticeable in Proust that although the subject matter of his treatment of sex is the melancholy and even tragic disillusionment worked by Time, it is always the *mental states* of his characters, their real psychology as they are fully aware of it—apart from any psychoanalytical explaining away—with which he is concerned; and for all the disillusionment produced by his microscopic analysis what might be called *the original dignity of the deceived ego* still remains intact.

Most of our younger contemporaries either substitute a dark, crushing, obscure, rather horrific underworld of

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blind unconscious sea monsters for the natural physiognomic look of the sea, or they throw the human "psyche," with its personal dignity and imaginative broodings, overboard altogether, and concern themselves with the savage automatic behaviourism of the bodily functions alone.

When the hero of this book contemplates Albertine asleep and notes the complete difference between the revelation of her personality as revealed in her profile from the one revealed in her full face, both the dignity of the lover's "psyche" and the dignity of the loved one's "psyche" are fully preserved.

Proust disentangles indeed with the most exquisite and patient care all the fantastic threads that go to the weaving of the coloured tapestry of our sex illusion; but the tapestry itself, by a kind of delicate magic, remains suspended upon the chamber-wall of the soul even after this process is complete. We are led to understand the *nature* of the glamour; but the glamour itself, although analysed to the last thread, is forever weaving itself together again, by reason of that eternal necessity of human nature to live by illusion, out of which its worth and dignity, and interest to the artist and to the philosopher, are fabricated and upheld.

The monster-headed hobgoblins of the Bedlam of the Unconscious are never permitted by Proust to assassinate the natural human psychology of the sentient and rational "soul," any more than is that rough, brutal—hell, let's have a drink!—mood, of pure unmitigated physiology, allowed to pound the essential dignity and mystery of a human being into an inordinate mass of automatic, physical writhings, jerkings, and indignant carnal despair.

JAMES JOYCE

The prose works of James Joyce, these three singular masterpieces, in a genre as yet scarcely delivered of all its formidable and disturbing potentialities, *Portrait of*

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the Artist as a Young Man, *Ulysses*, and a *Work in Progress*, all of these making such rolling reverberations throughout the literary world, may well be taken *en masse* and in one critical coup, in an analysis of their contribution to the handling of sex as an æsthetic motif.

For Joyce's *épopée* of modern life, his dithyramb to sex as the grand panacea for the ills of modern life, is implicit in *The Portrait*, manifest throughout the psychic tensions and super-elaborations of *Ulysses*, and about to be consummated in the convoluted hieroglyphs and enormous word-pantomimes of a *Work in Progress*.

All three books have Dublin in the first place, and the whole history of Ireland in the second place, as their rich background, a background in Space, descending into the nether-rocks and planetary geology of these localities, and a background in Time receding to the far-away racial origins and historical and prehistorical cross-breedings of the Irish people. It is as an exponent of the peculiarly Irish reactions to sex—for the deep psychic differences in this terrain, dividing English from French, French from Germans, Germans from Americans, is a topic containing layers and rockbottoms of curious interest as yet hardly approached—that Joyce primarily strikes us; and not only of Irish but of Catholic Irish reactions. Without the disciplines, the suppressions, the sublimations of the Catholic attitude to sex, Joyce's personal absorption in it would have taken on a totally different colour. Nor is he alone among great men of genius in this. Cut out of Rabelais' treatment of sex the mediæval Catholic tradition, cut out of Dostoievsky's treatment of sex the sex psychology of the New Testament, and what, in either case, would be left?

A student at Zurich though he has been, it is easy to overestimate—a fault indeed into which most popular critics naturally fall—the purely psychoanalytical element in Joyce. Technically, it is quite certain, he substitutes an

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emotional method of his own, much more erudite, much more personal, much less scientific, for both the Freudian and the Jungian procedure; and it seems as if the recondite and savage inspirations of his sex-vein dynamitings would have been jerked up in their volcanic spasms very much as they have been, had the psychoanalytical school of sex-psychology never existed at all! It is from the abysmal armoury of the Catholic Confessional, of Catholic Casuistry, of Scholastic Erudition and Sublimation, that Joyce's formidable engines of research, for use in this Tartarean mine-shaft, are drawn.

But like all great men of genius Joyce makes of the particular reservoir that he exploits a channel into the universal sea of human sex feeling. Dubliner, Irishman, and ex-Seminarist as he is, the demonic drive of his genius tosses the whole pell-mell of his Anna Livia Plurabelle's off-scourings into the wine-dark ocean of our common human erotic experience.

The three prose works of Joyce represent indeed an ascending and widening staircase of sex-discovery. *The Portrait* deals with the onanistic cerebralism of a passionate and learned youth. All is ingrown, all is introverted, all is charged with imaginative semen. *Ulysses* mounts up and extends the scope of the Joycean Anatomy of Love. Joyce divides himself here into sacred and secular. Dedalus is the sacred, spiritual self, Bloom the secular, profane self. In orgiastic and antiphonal alternation they plunge, they swim, they dive in the deep Cyprian sea.

Then comes the *Work in Progress*; and the musical Escalator of Joyce's grasp on the mystery mounts yet further and widens yet more. But it is still sex that provides the oil to fill the lamp that illuminates, as far as anything can illuminate, this panoramic Totem-Dance of mythologic entities. Joyce's handling of sex from first to last is a reaction from Seminarist suppression. Behind it all burns and seethes and smokes that appalling Sermon upon Hell's

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Torments, physical and spiritual, which the young priest-neophyte listened to with terrified ears in *The Portrait*. The “agenbite of inwit” which corrodes the mind of Dedalus with remorse about his mother’s death and throws up into lurid relief every spasm of his physical desire, or his mental insurrections, is answered and echoed in Bloom by a gross shamefaced secrecy—the “Sweets of Sin”—in his furtive dodgings to and from his wife’s warm bed.

But if, on the one side of their Hephæstian shield, the sex invocations of Joyce are dominated by a revolt from the Seminarist Confessional, on the other side they are characterized by an equally emotional revolt from the “genteel” traditions of that English Culture which he felt above everything else to be inimical to his æsthetic self-assertion.

There is a very curious inverted snobbishness in Joyce in connection with this—the furious and frantic intellectual snobbishness of one who consciously rejects on every occasion, rejects with hatred, maliciousness, violence, an alien culture. When the English dean in Stephen Dedalus’ Seminary is trying to be polite to the Irish lad, the boy thinks in his heart—“The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language so familiar and so foreign will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.”—And just as the soul of the young Dedalus frets “in the shadow” of our English tongue, so does the soul of James Joyce fret “in the shadow” of our English gentility, *and especially of this gentility in relation to sex.*

If there is a moral snobbishness, a prim fastidiousness, about the English attitude to sex since the first decades of the nineteenth century, there is an inverted snobbishness—in the sense of a scrupulously proud contempt for its op-

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posite—in the emotional passion with which Joyce emphasizes the physiological, the shocking, the repulsive, whenever he approaches the erotic field.

Nor is it only as against Anglo-Saxon prudery that this proud disdainful realism of Joyce lifts up its sea-urchin's head. It displays itself quite as savagely, quite as brutally, in these sex matters, as against the beguiling and provocative voluptuousness of French erotic vignettes. Compare a book like *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, or compare any of the softly-tinted Watteau-like love scenes in Anatole France or Rémy de Gourmont with his method, and you become aware that there is in Joyce a ferocity of sardonic realism which howls forth a proletarian cat-call, like the jeering of a foul-mouthed butcher-boy, against both French voluptuousness and English reserve, the moment any amorous situation crops up. Joyce uses mythological symbolism; but nothing could be less really classical, whether in the early Homeric sense, or in the late Theocritean sense, than this mania of his for emphasizing the physical pollutions of the body when dealing with the erotic. Sex, in Joyce's writings, is not invariably accompanied by pleasure, but it is invariably accompanied by the presence of something repulsive and excremental, does not mount up in a towering tidal wave of Dionysian ecstasy, as with Rabelais, or roll away in long waves of well-being, as with Whitman. It remains harsh, dry, discordant, erudite, and obsessed by a sort of ice-cold, insane obscenity. Nor is the "Psyco-phathia Sexualis" in Joyce's formidable genius really the same thing, although it is allied to it, as Swift's maniacal preoccupation with foulness and pollution. There is a haggard zest, a grim, shrill gusto about the Orgy Scene in *Ulysses*, when dead and living, animate and inanimate, join in that wild Devil's Dance, which is one of the most powerful scenes in our English tongue—our tongue thus twisted to his own wild use by this man who hates it with such deadly hatred!—but this curious exuberance, like a phan-

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tasmagoria of monumental vulgarity in a Cosmic-Scholastic Burlesque Show, makes its own deep-sea frenzied dives into the sexual perversions in a manner so startling, so imaginative—see, for example, Bloom's changes of sex—that one feels the author had nothing to learn at either Vienna or Zurich.

Joyce's writings are saturated with sex; but not with sex pleasure; or if with sex pleasure, with sex pleasure where the element of physiological unpleasantness mingles with the thing and gives it its touch of reality.

What in English writers—since the eighteenth century—is sentimental, what in French writers is voluptuous and ironical, becomes, the moment Joyce touches it, associated with the school dormitory and the school latrine. But what does this mean? It only means that Joyce, of all writers the most self-absorbed, is, when it comes to this matter of sex, the most ferociously and shamelessly objective.

For where is sex realism—devoid of the Rabelaisian fling and surge and unction—more realistic than in a boy's lavatory?

It is here that the ego-centric intensity of Joyce freezes stark and cold in an infantile fixation that has a deep philosophical weight. The tone towards sex used in a schoolboy's lavatory, at some school which would be very different from a modern American one, is precisely and exactly the tone towards sex used throughout the whole of Joyce's work. No doubt such schoolboy ribaldry is not confined to Dublin. From the days of ancient Corinth and Ephesus there must have been in all cities the jeering, mocking, satirical mud-throwing by intellectual hoodlums, who are the terror of the fastidious, and whose tone, when they uncover the secrets of sex with their harsh jibings, is much more like Joyce than it is like Rabelais. But if the exact and precise aspect of sex which moralists adore to call "dirt" is naturally accentuated in a writer whose genius is a reaction from a moralistic suppression of the subtlest kind

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that exists, you can trace another and a very different influence of the Seminary upon the method of Joyce, in the manner in which his profound learning, especially his exhaustive Latinity, plays its part in all he writes. The genius of Joyce can hardly be said to have any mysterious Sex Vision or Secular Grail of Sex, as its eternal objective. It may be said to have two steeds—one black and one dapple-grey—upon whose backs he rides wildly away from every kind of ideal. One of these horses is the rampaging and pitiless “argot” of the modern vulgar city-dweller. The other is a philological Colossus, gathering grist for its mill from every age and every language, delirious with the verbal parallelisms, consonancies, correspondencies, and onomatopœic felicities, brooding over word-mysteries, heavy with the night-dews of runic secrets, its nostrils opening to the “long backward and abyss of time,” where the dim motions of our far-off race histories toss and tumble on the huge sea of the past.

In all three books, in *The Portrait*, in *Ulysses*, in the *Work in Progress*, Joyce’s handling of sex displays a curious and very complex amalgam. It combines raw and rank physiology—the orgasms, pollutions, maladies and deformities of the erotic urge—with a far-drawn, fantastical, historical, and mythopœic symbolism, and both of these with a downright, brutal, vulgar, satirical burlesque; and in all these books there is the mingling of that almost ecstatic sense of word-play—word-implications, word-conjuring, word-coining, word-marrying, word-murdering, word-melting, word-apotheosizing, word-hypostisizing—which takes up the basic facts of sex and perpetually raffles them and unravels them, with passages of almost Shakespearean imagination. The mischief is that the obscurity—for the average person—of the *Work in Progress* retards and perplexes us in our approach to this amazing *tour de force* where a superhuman and inspired scholarship is so evidently at work, melting down the obdurate vertebræ of

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many languages in order to forge, like Hephaestus, inviting beds of love where the sons of the gods can embrace the daughters of men without relucting at having to wallow in all the too-human privy-work, nourishment-work, laundry-work, obstetric-work, ablution-work, purgative-work, wherein these unfastidious doxies and scouring trollops do so literally and liberally live.

Comparing Joyce's treatment of sex with that of these other masters of modern literature it seems to emerge that his purpose is at once far more personal and far more purely æsthetic. Where Lawrence preaches and prophesies, treating sex as a religion, where Proust botanizes and analyses, treating sex as a subject for exact science, where Dreiser propagandizes for human "liberty" and cosmic "truth," Joyce seems urged on by two motives alone: first by an ego-centric necessity for heroic exhibitionism; and secondly by gigantic, titanic delight in rocking the cradle of this shameless progeny of the confessional on a huge sea of philological orchestrations.

What Joyce refuses to tolerate for a moment is first the quick-cover cuddling and cockering of sex as something too intimate-sweet to be viewed naked—the sentimental attitude, and secondly the enskying and etherealizing of it as something that never could tumble in the mud—the ideal attitude. His own attitude is a sardonic and demi-semi-poetical one, frankly physiological and carried to a bitter, disillusioning limit, but humanized by the merciful and im-memorial ministrations of that universal Hen-Bird of all our multifarious homes.

Lead kind fowl! They always did; ask the ages. What bird has done yesterday man may do next year, be it fly, be it moult, be it hatch, be it agreement in the nest. . . . She knows, she just feels she was kind of born to lay and love eggs (trust her to propagate the species and hoosh her fluffballs safe through din and danger!); lastly but mostly, in her genesic field it is all game and no gammon, she is ladylike in everything she does and plays the gentleman's part every time . . . the

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manewanting human lioness with her dishorned discipular man-ram will lie down publicly flank upon fleece.

Sex, in fine, in Joyce's hands is neither a provocation to heathen pleasure nor a debasing of the holy spirit of mankind. It is the grand old conjuring trick of the Ancient of Days, to keep his little flock in some kind of heart and on the brink of some sort of heaven, before we are laid on our backs in the big bed, with little hope of awakening.

Completely in error and led astray by their own fidgety "libido" are those who regard Joyce's attitude to sex as a lurid provocation.

The mere fact that he is one of our leaders in the modern attempt to scoop up into art all the slang, all the steam-shovels, all the advertisement signs, all the vulgar catch-words, all the raw chaos-fluff and refuse-filings through which we fumble, is hint enough that the "Sweets of Sin," in his vision of things, will have to jog humbly along with a great deal else! Compared with many epochs of our race's history this particular age, although so frank about sex, is by no means as much sex-ridden as it is machine-ridden; and in Joyce's treatment of sex the Saturnalia of the Inanimate from which we all suffer reduces the aristocratic and godlike dignity of Eros, makes him dance the Carmagnole and sing the Internationale without allowing Priapus to usurp his place! But the modern machine-made slang, so hard-boiled and so cynical, in which Joyce makes his god of Love utter vulgar cock-crows, blends and fuses, in this amazing Panurge of Philology, with a lilting and rhythmical humour which is almost Falstaffian. In his reaction against modern English gentility it is to the old Shakespearean tags that he turns. But his sex mischief and sex nonsense, ale-mellowed by the Elizabethans, acquire a Dublin twist that changes all:

Ah but she was the queer old skewsha anyhow, Anna Livia, trinket-toes. And sure he was the quare old buntz too. Dear dirty Dumpling, foosterfather of fingalls and dotthergills. Gammer and gaffer we're all

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their gangsters. Hadn't he seven dams to wive him? And every dam had her seven crutches. And every crutch had its seven hues. And each hue had a differing cry. Sudds for me and supper for you and the Doctor's bill for Joe John.

DREISER

The contribution made by Theodore Dreiser to the sex consciousness of our era seems less easy to weigh in the balance, or estimate with any exact precision, than that of our other first-rate writers. And this is because the peculiar genius of this unique figure in American letters springs from the man's colossal wholeness of self-assertion.

Most writers' personal lives can be separated from their work, or rather their work, considered as so much exterior craftsmanship or occasional inspiration, can be disentangled from their lives, as something that they have consciously projected. But in Dreiser's case we are always left with the feeling—whatever of his we may read—that the man behind the work is much greater than anything he has ever written or conceivably *could* write. That he should write at all—whether vast realistic novels, or autobiographical sketches, or dithyrambic celebrations of passing moods—seems so much more of a premeditated, objective achievement than that he should walk or breathe or eat or talk. The singular wholeness of his extraordinary identity surrounds, with an invisible psychic circumference, the centrifugal energy of his being; and each of his separate writings is, as it were, a Parhelion, or Mock-Sun, a dark spot or a luminous spot upon the steady halo of his familiar personality.

That much too "staled and rung upon" word "Cosmic," applicable to Whitman, and in a measure to Tolstoy, is the only word really congruous with this quality of "wholeness" in Dreiser.

His very playfulness, unlike that of other, cleverer

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writers, remains the mastodon-playfulness of some vast fragment of primordial world-stuff, hugely relishing its æonian escape from the pressure of the life-urge, and basking "pro-tem" in fathomless inertia. And it is from these spells of planetary relaxation that the indolent "rub-a-dub-dub" and "rum-ti-dum-ti-dum" of his literary lapses (the hummings and drummings of some great, drowsy, nebular bumblebee) rise and sink so often. Capable of treating literature—that human-too-human laborious cult—with an abysmal indifference Dreiser certainly is, and what, with a wide allowance, might be called his "style" is simply the name we are forced to give, for lack of a better, to his complete contempt for style.

The miraculous convincingness of his shoddy, shabby, tatterdemalion, catch-as-catch-can characters, so heart-breaking in their reality, is the result of his turning upon these poor ephemerae the cyclopean eye of a non-human cosmic curiosity. Without admiration and without normal pity, he does these pathetically ordinary men and women the honour of being taken more seriously and with more passionate interest than such poor dogs and lamentable bitches have ever been taken before or ever will be taken again.

To the eye of an auto-ruinous and entropic universe the psychological subtleties of people, their strutting conceits, their pinchbeck grandeurs, their theatrical gestures, are on a level with the preoccupied motions of beetles in the grass or of flies on the ceiling; but the wonder, after all, does remain that these terrestrial Lilliputians are living organisms at all—each one struggling to go up, up, up, and most of them being thrust down, down, down!—and into the heart of every organism, not because it is beautiful or clever or even pitiful, but simply because it is *there*, simply because it has undergone the inescapable tragedy of being born, just as we see it, so weak, so help-

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less, so unimportant, Dreiser gazes, with a numb, dumb, hypnotic stare of sombre astonishment.

Now when the phenomenon of human sex is treated from the viewpoint of the dark suns in sidereal space, it cannot be expected that the difference between Platonic yearnings and bestial claspings should bulk very large. What does, however, bulk large in Dreiser's erotic passages is the sex urge itself, that half-physical, half-psychic magnetic attraction which none of us escape and which resembles so closely the mysterious thermo-dynamic thrusts and pulls which are perpetually creating and destroying our chemic-atomic, radio-active world. His books are full of this sex urge; and it is always treated by him as something completely outside the control of conventional human valuations and traditional tribal imperatives.

And it is because this sex urge is reduced by him to such a blind-overpowering, elemental force that he uses it, exposes it, and presupposes it, with such a liturgic monotone of exclamatory recognition! The wholeness of his nature and its massive telluric responses to cosmic stimuli, is illustrated by the way he writes of sex. He hails this mighty urge in himself with exactly the same shameless relish with which he greets it in others. Why not? This thing is indeed the tyrant alike of the evil and the good; and Dreiser shows that you have only to see it at work to know that it is more powerful than any system of human valuations or distinctions yet invented by mortal custom.

The dominant "motif" of Dreiser's books is the tragic opposition offered by economic pressure, social conditions, and public opinion, to the free flow, backwards and forwards, between people, of this primeval sex magnetism; and the fact that his lovers are permitted by him to indulge in so much "baby-talk," as the phrase is, and to deluge each other with such splashings of primeval sentiment, is only one indication the more that what interests him is not the psychological convolutions of sex feeling in any particular

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human being's nerves, but the great flood of unconquerable eroticism, as it seethes and foams and leaps over every barrier, in all the children of men alike. And just as the particular angle from which he views sex permits his lovers to brim over in rippling baby-talk and in the spontaneous gibble-gabble of bird-beast courtship, so it relieves him from the necessity of debouching into abnormal pastures. All Krafft-Ebing, all Freud-Jung-Adler-Brill is condensed in every radiating atom of stardust and in every light-vibration from the Milky Way. The most normal ache of the heart, the most natural sinking of the pit of the stomach, the most commonplace nervous excitement in the engines of generation, any one of these things is witness enough to the presence of the universal Love-Tide.

In that curious play called *The Hand of the Potter* Dreiser deviates for once into the realm of homicidal perversity; but it is a question whether any of these various erotic perversions, sadism, masochism, homosexuality, Lesbianism, can be rendered *from within*—that is to say, with the intimate, imaginative, secretive ecstasy *felt* in the description—unless the author has more of the bitter-sweet poison of inverted proclivities in himself than a cosmic soothsayer of Dreiser's temperament usually has.

There is something more Goethean than Casanova-like in the free unblushing manner in which Dreiser monologizes about his loves; and, as is the case in *Wilhelm Meister* and the *Autobiography*, we feel that what sex excitement is really doing, for this self-revealing Faustus of the Modern City, is rather the stimulation of his psychochemic responses to an overshadowing mystery, a mystery that seems to him as remote from human lust as it is remote from human virtue, and to which he must react, if he reacts at all, with the dark taciturn *wholeness* of his nature, than to set him composing psychological disquisitions upon the difference between the microcosm "man" and the microcosm "woman."

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But as he has gone along upon his enigmatic and explosive way it is inevitable that Dreiser should have influenced our contemporary American scrupulosity with regard to sex. His sombre and towering prestige, and the titanic obstinacy with which he has shouldered his course through so much obloquy and detraction, entail such influence. And his weight has been entirely and faithfully thrown on the side of moral freedom!

The fact that his characters are plain, simple people, the fact that he has himself been persecuted by Americans for the honesty of his writings, the fact that he loves America and understands America and *is* American, as no other American of our time except Mr. Masters could claim to be, all these things have made his well-known champion-ship of the freedom of personal life from interference in the matter of sex no negligible element in the history of our time.

It is his very consciousness, unsleeping and unwearied, of the grim pressure of certain dark, inscrutable forces upon our days, that has made his influence, in a very deep sense, rather a mystical than a hedonistic one.

His grave, sombrely-brooding awareness of the essential irrationality of life, its blind, chaotic confusions—like the cracking and grinding of vast ice-floes in an Arctic night—tends, in the large issue, towards a tragic responsibility rather than towards any airy gallantry!

It is noticeable that the younger generation in their handling of sex find it easier to imitate the superficial aspects of the sardonic realism of Joyce, or the richly-charged pan-psychism of Lawrence, than to attempt the task of competing with Dreiser. Nor is the cause of this far to seek. The one grand trick of creative genius which never can be imitated is the power that comes from that particular kind of *wholeness* to which reference has already been made. Between such “wholeness” of nature and an author’s literary output there often intervenes a deliberate

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barrier of style. This "style" can be copied and reproduced; whereas that weight of personality which Dreiser so carelessly reveals as being behind his unsifted, unwinnowed, unpurged use of words, is something beyond all copying.

It is a thing worthy of note, and not without its esoteric significance, that there are a great many "unliterary" people who are intensely moved, and most touchingly stirred, by Dreiser's way of handling sex. Such people, immersed in the absorbing practical transactions of our machine age, find the sensuous intricacies of Proust, the crushing bizarceries and burlesquings of Joyce, the wild "dim black-guardism" of Lawrence, totally outside their experience. It is to Dreiser alone, among the greater writers of our time, that they can turn, for a reflection in a mirror of genius the normal feelings that harrow them and exalt them. In Dreiser alone the dark, occult penumbra of sex passion, the stooping down of their midnight flights across the cosmos of huge inexplicable wings, give a disturbing and thunderous background to familiar, everyday human struggles; struggles after the simple satisfaction of love, of lust, of power-thirst, of pleasure-hunger, of the natural, pent-up ache to share a lonely bed, with someone who really cares!

D. H. LAWRENCE

The two Englishmen who have made the greatest contribution to the problem of sex-life in modern times are unquestionably Havelock Ellis, who fortunately for us all is still active and alive, and D. H. Lawrence, whose too early death we are still lamenting. The first to do justice to certain great forbidden worlds, like those of Nietzsche and Casanova, Havelock Ellis has done more to liberate the minds of his English contemporaries from sex taboos than any other writer; but it was left to Lawrence to turn his own personal nerve-song and nerve-dance into

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a veritable Metaphysic for the Incontinent. From *Sons and Lovers*, his first book, to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, his last book, Lawrence has boldly and heroically followed the cult of what he calls his "dark gods."

The two books of his, however, from which it is perhaps easiest to deduce the dominant principles of his doctrine are *Kangaroo*, the book about Australia, and *Studies in Classic American Literature*, the book about Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe. In the former of these he invents a Jewish protagonist whose habits and ideas represent the traditional view of Love—Love Spiritual, Love Sentimental, Love Possessive—against which he is making war; while in the latter he uses the White Whale of Melville as a symbol for this same enemy. His idea seems to be that the old-fashioned view of Love to which we Anglo-Saxons have so long done obeisance—hypocritical or sincere—a Love founded on our race's savage possessiveness, sublimated by mediæval chivalry and by passages from the writings of St. Paul, has grown to be something crippling and cramping for the human spirit.

As against this traditional conception of Love—and it must always be remembered that Lawrence is an Englishman fighting against English metaphysical compromises; for Anatole France would be as sceptical of the new Laurentian "Love" as of the old "Pauline Love"—he advocates a "dark god" cult which is nothing less than an apotheosis of a certain kind of lust. Of what kind of lust? Here indeed we reach the crux of this singular writer's daring doctrine.

Certainly not of any easy, furtive, indolent, hedonistic self-indulgence. Disciples of Lawrence very quickly discover that where the burden of Jesus weighs on us like a lath of wood, the burden of Lawrence weighs on us like a bar of iron. The lust he eulogizes, in fact, as worthy to take the place of the love we have been taught is in reality a formidable gathering together of our heathen self-reliance and independence and the shameless use of the

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curved claws of our taciturn and intractable ego to make a wholesome clutch upon our sweet friend-foe!

This friend-foe in *her* turn—for in most of his books, *Women in Love*, not the less, Lawrence is speaking from the masculine viewpoint—allows this “hit-and-run” game to take place in the open, in full sunlight, in clear air; and when the masculine claws prove themselves—in this towering-tourney of equal eagles—as we are assured by Lawrence they will, the stronger and more deadly, *then* with an intoxicatingly sweet submission, bringing heavenly delight to both, the feminine eagle cries “Conquered!” and they both sink down upon their rocky eyrie!

And as with normal heterosexual relations, this refreshing, this wholesome, this *en plein air* battle is not to be avoided or glossed over, but to be relished to the fullest measure and carried to the utmost limit, so in abnormal homosexual relations the same struggle goes on, resulting in an armed neutrality, if equality is preserved, or in an honourable and life-giving feudal relationship of noble master and noble servant.

But it is not so much the final issue—for this may prove, and indeed must prove, of very varied elements—as the frankly recognized conflict itself, full of the joy of battle between the enamoured protagonists and hardening them and strengthening them both in the use of their war-nerves, that is the important thing.

Let a hundred years go by and other fashions of love and loving take the place of ours, and other love-doctrines prevail, what writer of our generation will at that time, and for those people, most entirely represent our era—call it the era of the Great War—in the handling of erotic complications?

Representing the English-speaking race, one would say without a moment’s hesitation—D. H. Lawrence.

All the peculiar tricks, gestures, posings, reposings, maskings, unmaskings, curiosities, manias, phobias, de-

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mentias, idealisms, illusions, disillusionments, fantasias, introversions, madnesses and explanations of madnesses, with psychoanalysis tugging at us from one side and behaviourism from the other, that our age enjoys and suffers from, can be found at large, and yet saturated with his own particular spiritual flavour, in the work of D. H. Lawrence.

And what have been the influences that have affected Lawrence himself? Well! There is something of Nietzsche, something of Whitman, something of Edward Carpenter, in the tone he adopts. That curious wild, liquid-sobbing, weeping-laughing love lyricism that seems to be akin to the flowering of the sap in spring-sorcerized vegetation, suggests the terraqueous incantations of Walt Whitman, his "tears, tears, tears" of the night-figure upon the sands, his sagging moons heavy with tragic dews, his "liquid" trees, his full-bosomed, apple-bearing earth.

One special tendency of our Great War mood in its treatment of sex is paramount in Lawrence: what might be called the erotic anonymity of all his fictional characters. One forgets their names, these puppets of his, one forgets their plots, their backgrounds, their dramas, their separate opinions. One almost forgets—and this is peculiarly characteristic of Lawrence—*their very sex*. Through them all, as through patient and responsive reeds, this proletarian Dionysus pipes his entralling rhapsodies. The dark gods! One may be sure that to any pleasure-loving profligate of a lighter, gayer, less mystical age—of the eighteenth century, for instance—the service of these dim exacting angels of lust would be as gloomy and responsible as religion itself!

And responsible and gloomy in many ways, in spite of his wild jestings and rhythmic exultations, Lawrence certainly is. It is the first time, perhaps, in all literature that erotic sensation *has been taken so seriously*, though it has frequently, our being as we are, been made a desperate and antinomian quest.

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This seriousness, this passionate and intense gravity in Lawrence, compared with the mischievous light-hearted naughtiness of other epochs, mounted up at the last, possibly under the pressure of his illness, to a prophetic and oracular tone that drove all Rabelaisian humour, as it drove all ironical malice, totally off the field. Lust, in becoming so grave a cult, not only ceased to be lechery, it became a kind of portentous priggishness. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where it is a mistake to suppose that the self-satisfied young workingman, who ousts the woman's cold-blooded, war-maimed husband, is sadistic in the brutality in which—in *flagrante delictu*—he bullies her into using those old Preparatory-School monosyllables usually associated with the walls of jakes and lavatories, this particular tone of physiological priggishness reaches a point that to a Celtic mind is comical and to a Latin mind simply barbarous.

We have all made the mistake—in fact, it is one of the ways in which posterity will recognize our generation—of assuming that this eminently moral way of being libidinous *ex cathedra* is the same thing as being what we are accustomed to call “pagan.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Anything less “pagan” than the feverish and frantic gravity with which Lawrence goes to work to transform his “dark gods” into a New Religion could hardly be imagined. One has only to turn over the pages of Apuleius, no very hard-boiled pagan, to find this out. And yet, though it is easy, from an irresponsible profane viewpoint, to make sport of all this, our psychoanalysis-be-witched era has undoubtedly achieved certain deep and permanent insights for the eroticists of our race. And among us all no one has dived deeper into these sub-Atlan-tean secrets than D. H. Lawrence.

The masculine “soul” in women, the feminine “soul” in men, the appalling undersea battle that goes on between these “dark” souls, scrabbling “below the belt” and wrest-

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ling in the half-conscious if not in the sub-conscious Cave of the man-eating Mothers, these things have never been described with such poetic eloquence, never been made so exciting to the mythological mind as they are here.

Born Jacobin as he is, D. H. Lawrence creates an imaginary labouring-man, an Adamic primitive to set against his finicking and funky aristocrats, just as Whitman erected his imaginary Democratic-man, to set against his degenerate Europeans; and just as with Whitman's "symbolic male," there is a vein of something savage, intolerant, and coarse in the hirsute eroticism of this ideal figure. It is true that the horned violence of Lawrence's ideal male—so intractable, truculent, unpersonable—is less narcissistic and self-satisfied than Whitman's and far less purely physiological. Lawrence's "dark gods" imply, in fact, a deep spiritual transmutation of mere physical desire into something that becomes the spear-head of the person's whole subterranean being.

In its stoical and almost ferocious stripping off of the trappings of our bourgeois civilization, Lawrence's athletic and proletarianized Eros might, one feels, serve many of the purposes of the great Russian Prolet-cult. But Englishman from the Midlands as he is, his poetic prejudice against industrialism and machinery makes this "figure against the sky" of his erotic dreaming more anti-social than any dictatorship could possibly tolerate; and it has been this anti-social element in him, this misanthropic Return to Nature, that always led him to hanker after the free ranch-life of Mexico and New Mexico, vast spaces and horizons, where his "dark gods" encounter something reciprocal and corresponding in the solitary eagles and serpents of the descendants of the Lost Atlantis.

It is a far cry from Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to the altars of Quetzalcoatl, just as it is a far cry from his early lyrical poems to the sexual savageries of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; but any real devotee

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of Lawrence—and as with most mystical prophets he tends to excite as much hatred as he does love—will feel that his too brief and stormy life possesses a real tragic unity, as if Euripides had written the drama of a defeated and lacerated Dionysus. Far removed, as we have hinted, is the “paganism” of Lawrence from the fresh-blowing classical winds of Homer, or the wet seashells and dewy flocks of Theocritus, but if one does force oneself to link him up with the race who knew Eros, the true lover of Psyche, as he was, it is to some of the strange moods of the author of the *Bacchanals* that one would turn for a parallel.

A poet, first and last, it has been left for D. H. Lawrence to lend to those insatiable searchings into the underworld of spiritualized lust, which is one of the glorious maladies of our age, an age already passing away, a dark magical beauty full of disturbing and troubling overtones, full of motions and murmurs of things that have no name!

Chapter Four

MODERN DRAMA

by ELMER RICE

TO DISCUSS the subject of "Sex in Modern Drama" is not an easy task. Especially not if one approaches it with a certain degree of scientific curiosity and dispassionate objectivity. For nearly all that has been said and written upon the theme—and it is much!—has been coloured by the emotions of the speaker or writer, who is usually concerned with demonstrating that the stage is "indecent" and a menace to public morals and who marshals his evidence accordingly. In America and in England, the theatre has been, for three centuries, almost continuously under fire from the clergy, whose premise that the theatre is *per se* an immoral institution robs their criticism, it seems to me, of much of its validity. Consciously or unconsciously, the church recognizes in the theater a formidable rival. Religious in its origin, the drama presents the same elements of appeal as does organized religious worship. We find, in both, the same attack upon the senses and the emotions through the use of lights, of music, of rich vestments, of resonant voices, of decoration, and of a more or less stylized pantomime. Furthermore, both offer the authoritative presentation of an ideology which includes the glorification of the ideals of truth, sacrifice, duty, and love; the naïve opposi-

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tion of god-like heroism to diabolical villainy; the achievement of happiness through suffering; and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. The technique of the stage and the technique of the pulpit are remarkably similar; the actor and the clergyman are brothers under their skins. (I intend no disparagement of either.) Also, in both church and theatre, we find the same mob-like audience, which has paid its money for the privilege of worshipping and believing.

I am not as far afield from my subject as I may appear to be. What I am trying to say is that to view the pulpit as the guardian of morality and the stage as its violator is merely to look at the same thing through differently-tinted glasses, and to allow one's judgment to be disarmed by one's emotions. It is not my purpose either to attack or to defend the theatre. I shall attempt merely to evaluate the part which "sex" plays in modern drama; but in order to do so I find it necessary to discount the fulminations of the clergy, which have deafened and blinded so many presumably reasonable persons. (Almost everyone likes to believe himself to be moral and decent, and, therefore, an appeal to morality and decency seldom fails.) Incidentally, so that the reader may be put upon his guard against my own bias, I do not mind saying that I am decidedly—indeed almost militantly—anti-clerical, and that I believe that the church has done incalculable damage to the theatre, both as an art and as a social institution.

Before coming to a consideration of just what we mean by "sex" and a more or less detailed study of its various manifestations in modern drama, it seems to me well to point out that any profitable discussion of the subject must necessarily be a comparative one. For this reason, I suggest the use of three "controls" which may well be employed as touchstones, in the course of an examination of the use of sexual themes and sexual motifs in contemporary drama. In the first place, how does the treatment of

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sex, in modern drama, compare with its treatment in the drama of other epochs? Secondly, what is the relation between the actual use of sexual material upon the stage and its possible use (and by possible, I mean physically possible and not merely socially or legally permissible)? Thirdly, how closely does the use of sexual material upon the stage approximate its use in other art forms, and in other media of expression (e.g., advertisements, scientific publications, private conversation)? As I shall have occasion to refer repeatedly to one or another of these "controls," I suggest their careful consideration, by the reader, as a necessary preliminary to any intelligent examination of the subject under discussion.

I come now to an extremely involved and perplexing question. When we talk about sex in modern drama, just what do we mean by "sex"? Obviously, we mean something other than the mere thematic use of an emotional relationship between a man and a woman: in short, something other than mere "love interest." For it may safely be said that love interest, in one form or another, is the backbone of all drama, both ancient and modern; and that the plays which do not make liberal use of it are so few in number as to constitute startling exceptions to the almost universal rule. Nor is this surprising, since the sexual emotion plays a dominant part in the life of almost every human being and since the theatre is primarily an arena for the stimulation and vicarious satisfaction of the spectator's emotions, through his self-identification with the actors, who are engaged in counterfeiting emotional experiences.

Accordingly, there would be little value in demonstrating that practically every modern play, no matter what its plot or theme, depends largely for its interest and dramatic effectiveness upon the depiction of a sexual relationship. It is a fact so self-evident that it calls for no demonstration. I take it, therefore, that when we propose a discussion of sex in modern drama, we have in mind those aspects of

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sex which, for one reason or another, are subjects of social controversy or the representation of which tends to violate taboos or social conventions; to attack or criticize social institutions or customs, or to depart from standards of decency, propriety, and morality (recognized either by the community as a whole or by some important group within the community).

It is impossible to lump these socially questionable representations in one category. They are many and various. The theatre is a highly complex institution. The presentation of a play involves social and ideational as well as æsthetic and emotional elements. To begin with, it involves the employment of living actors: human beings, whose presence upon an elevated stage, upon which is centred the attention of some hundreds of receptive and susceptible spectators, invests their every word and movement with an importance and a significance far beyond the ordinary. Wittingly or unwittingly, the spectator reacts immediately and emotionally to the impact of the actor's personality (whether real or assumed). Consequently, every nuance of make-up, costume, gesture, and voice plays its part in setting up an emotional sympathy or antipathy in the spectator, in moving him to laughter or to tears, in arousing in him pity, terror or anger, in shocking him or outraging his sense of the proprieties. For this reason, it is most important to differentiate between the author's dialogue and stage directions as they appear upon the printed page and the same dialogue and stage directions as they are transmitted to the spectator in the theatre through the medium of the actor. It seems an obvious enough distinction, but it is one that is frequently overlooked. Almost any speech, be it never so innocuous, may be made to appear "suggestive," if it is read by the actor in such-and-such a way; and any piece of stage business may be projected in a manner calculated to outrage the sensibilities of some of the spectators. The converse, of course, is equally true. A colour-

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less reading may rob a speech of its intended innuendo; and any actor who knows his business can divert the attention of an audience from a bit of "offensive" pantomime. Those who contend that the actor is merely the pliant tool of the dramatist are as wrong as those who maintain that it is the actor alone to whom the audience responds. There is between actor and dramatist an interrelationship that is almost inextricable. When we read the plays of other times, it is impossible for us to imagine exactly how the actors performed them or how the audiences responded to them.

Apart from the projection of the play, we must consider the content of the play itself. This involves many things. It involves the depiction of physical situations, the pictorial representation of the locality of the action and the portrayal of social and emotional relationships. It involves further the use of language: not only the use *per se* of certain words having definite meanings, but the use of certain words in certain situations which give them a special significance or connotation. It involves, too, the choice and the use of themes and situations; and, more particularly, the use of certain situations in connection with certain themes.

There must be taken into consideration, furthermore, not only the fact that the theatre is a public institution and that plays are presented before large heterogeneous groups consisting of hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of men and women (and often children), but that there is pretty good reason to believe that a crowd reacts, both emotionally and intellectually, in a manner that differs considerably from what would be the individual reaction of its constituent members to the same stimulus. This peculiarity of mass psychology must be given due weight in comparing the use of sexual material in the drama with its use in other forms of expression which direct themselves to an

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individual or to a specialized group rather than to a miscellaneous crowd.

With these distinctions and reservations in mind, we can now perhaps attempt a classification of the various aspects of sexuality which we encounter in the drama and attempt a rough study of the manner and degree in which they are employed. I shall begin with the simplest and most obvious forms and proceed to the more complex and involved.

First of all, we must consider those elements which, while not in themselves of a sexual nature, tend to stimulate or arouse sexual emotion in the spectator. I refer to those sensory stimuli which are of the very essence of the theatre: light, music, colour, rhythmic speech and movement. It cannot be doubted that these elements make the drama in its very nature distinctly aphrodisiacal, a quality it has in common with all other art forms and with religious ritual. Ralph Adams Cram has said somewhere that a high mass in the Cathedral at Chartres in the thirteenth century was probably the finest artistic production that man has ever achieved, combining as it did architecture, sculpture, coloured glass, incense, music, vestments, and the sonorous recital of a highly dramatic legend. Such sensuous appeals produce an emotional excitation which is certainly sexual in its nature. But a study of the inter-relationship of art, religion, and sex goes beyond the scope of this paper and far beyond the abilities of its author. I wish merely to emphasize the fact that any theatrical representation is a sexual stimulant and that the eternal popularity of the theatre is in large measure due to this fact. Whether or not the theatre-goer of today brings to the playhouse less faith, less credulity, and, therefore, less capacity for ecstasy is a question I am unable to answer. Certainly, however, the drama of our time has lost the gift of poetic speech and of the depiction of heroic deeds.

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It is reasonable to assume that there is in the spectator a corresponding loss of exaltation.

To turn now to the distinctly sexual phenomena which we encounter upon the stage itself. The first that suggests itself to us is sexual exhibitionism: that is to say, the display of the human body in such a manner as to violate the current standards of propriety and to serve (actually or by intention) as a sexual stimulant. Since the display and the sight of the body is a source of pleasure to almost everybody, it is not surprising to find in all plastic and literary art forms either representations of complete or partial nudity or pointed allusions to it. The drama is unique in that it utilizes living men and women and it is possible, therefore, to produce by the simple process of disrobing an actor a sensual effect which in other art forms can be produced only by the skilful manipulation of pigment or stone or the cunning use of language. It does not, however, follow, it seems to me, that this direct effect which it is possible to obtain upon the stage is more potent than the indirect effect which is created by the painter, sculptor, poet, or novelist. On the contrary, I should say that the emphasis and the suggestion with which the painter and the sculptor invest their nudes, and the poet and novelist, their lyrical descriptions of the human body, produce in the susceptible spectator or reader a more potent effect than does the mere display of the nude human body upon the stage. Nevertheless, W. S. Gilbert's famous dictum to the effect that "in a novel one may read that 'Eliza stripped off her dressing-gown and stepped into her bath' without any harm; but I think if that were presented on the stage it would be shocking" is a concise statement of majority opinion. It is possible that many people will tolerate in private what they condemn in public. Even so, a theatre is hardly less public than an art gallery; yet, save for zealous popes who drape loin-cloths about the Christs of Michelangelo and earnest Boston ladies who adorn

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statues with fig leaves, there is a pretty general acceptance of complete nudity in painting and in sculpture.

As far as I know, complete nudity is not to be found upon the modern stage. Mr. Earl Carroll and the creators of the Folies Bergères have approximated it, by a number of ingenious devices, but I, myself, have never seen a completely and unequivocally nude person of either sex upon the stage. Here a distinction must be made, I think, between those forms of popular entertainment—revues, burlesque shows, vaudeville, and the like—which are designed solely for the purpose of amusement and sensual stimulation, and more ordered dramatic works in which some attempt is made at the portrayal of character or the expression of ideas. These varying forms are frequently included under the generic term “the theatre,” with resultant confusion. It will be found, I believe, that the general and continued use of sexual exhibitionism is confined almost entirely to the burlesque and musical comedy stage. The degree of nudity or of the suggestion of nudity has altered progressively with the modifications in the general standards with respect to such matters. Certainly, the standards of propriety of today are not those of a generation ago. It is not surprising to discover that the stage has kept pace with a generation that has discarded corsets, trailing skirts, and petticoats, with a generation that has embraced sun cures, one-piece bathing suits and backless evening gowns and has enriched the publishers of “art studies,” “true stories,” tabloid newspapers, and erotic novels. So far as the serious drama is concerned, I know of no such display of the human body as even remotely approximates what may be found in the poems of Walt Whitman or the novels of Rémy de Gourmont or upon the walls of any art gallery. Nevertheless, the Lord Chamberlain’s office has not found it possible to license Maeterlinck’s *Monna Vanna* in which the heroine, in order to save her city, visits the besieging general’s tent, nude—under her long cloak!

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Closely related to mere nudity or a provocative display of the human body is the performance of sexual acts (either actually or by suggestion). I know of no instance in modern drama in which any sexual act is represented as occurring upon the stage in the presence of the spectator. (Schnitzler's *Reigen* is a possible exception; but here the action takes place almost entirely in the dark. Furthermore, the performance of the play is strictly prohibited in most countries.) One of Brander Matthews's pupils who was asked to discuss how Greek morals were reflected in the Greek drama replied, "The Greeks were a very moral people; and in a Greek play, whenever people committed adultery, they did it off-stage and sent in a messenger to tell about it." In our own time, the *bon mot*, "the curtain is lowered to indicate a lapse of virtue," expresses pretty well the stage convention with respect to overt sexual behaviour.

This convention applies not only to extra-marital relationships, but to nuptial acts. Indeed, it is carried so far that one seldom sees upon the stage a man and a woman actually occupying the same bed. A "liberal" clergyman told me not long ago—as evidence of his broad-mindedness—that he did not regard as offensive a scene in a play of mine called *The Adding Machine*, in which a woman was represented as getting into bed beside her husband, although it was the first time he had ever seen anything of the sort upon the stage. In the scene in question there was not the remotest suggestion of any physical relationship. I cite this merely to demonstrate how general is the theatre's avoidance of anything resembling a direct representation of sexual behaviour. (This applies with perhaps even greater force to those bodily functions which, because of their intimate physiological and psychological relationship to the reproductive processes, must be included for the purposes of this discussion within the meaning of the term "sexual.")

Indeed, not only do we almost never find upon the

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stage a representation of physical acts, but there is also in the theatre a remarkable avoidance of any allusion to or description of such acts in physiological terms. I say remarkable, because in this respect the drama presents a striking contrast to numerous examples of modern poetry, fiction, and autobiography in which sexual behaviour is frankly and graphically described (and, of course, to innumerable scientific and pseudo-scientific works, which are in general circulation). Here, too, the drama of our time contrasts strikingly with that of the Greeks and the Elizabethans in which all sorts of physical behaviour were freely alluded to in unequivocal terms. When the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes was recently presented in New York, it was necessary to delete or "tone down" many of the allusions. Despite this bowdlerization, the production of the play aroused storms of protest and was frequently cited by the advocates of an official censorship of the theatre. (Curiously enough, many of those who protested against the production of *Lysistrata* did so upon the ground that a "classic" was being perverted in order to gratify the popular taste for pornography, whereas there is excellent reason to believe that this was exactly what Aristophanes set out to do. Of course, he probably did not know that he was writing a "classic.") If an uncut version of *Hamlet* has been produced upon the modern stage, it is only because the actors have been inaudible or because the audience finds the Shakespearean rhetoric unintelligible.

The modern drama abounds, of course, in situations in which it is stated or implied that sexual relationships exist and that sexual acts are performed, but the statement or implication is usually highly euphemistic and is made in such general or oblique terms as to avoid the direct evocation of a physical image. Indeed, so strongly is the ordinary audience in the grip of the sexual taboos and inhibitions that a mere reference to the delights of the nuptial couch or the pleasures of concupiscence is enough

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to arouse self-conscious laughter or sexual excitement. Indeed, the mere presence upon the stage of a bed never fails to provoke an audience to a state of expectancy, despite the fact that the sight of this article of furniture is a commonplace in everyone's daily life. A bathtub or a reference to bathing has a similar effect; and any reference to a water-closet or to the fact that a character has physical needs to satisfy is certain to bring forth gales of laughter. Such allusions are, of course, quite common in "classical drama," but until recently there has been a careful avoidance of such allusions in the drama of our time. Even now, the dramatist confines himself to general and rather vague suggestions which are far removed from the graphic disquisitions which may be found (for example) in the writings of James Joyce, Harry Kemp, and John Dos Passos. (I shall have occasion to speak later of the illustrations and "dramatized" descriptions which accompany the widely circulated advertisements of certain hygienic products and sanitary appliances.)

Another way in which we find sexual material employed in the theatre is through the use of words which are for one reason or another taboo. It is a very remarkable thing that the mere utterance of a syllable or a combination of syllables should have the power to provoke in the listener an intense emotional state. Yet that this is so no one can doubt. It is not a sufficient explanation to say that it is not the word but its connotation which arouses the emotion, for very often we find that of two words having exactly the same connotation one may be permissible and the other not. For example, "prostitute" and "whore" mean exactly the same thing, yet the use of the latter is still frowned upon on the stage, despite its frequent occurrence in the English Bible and throughout English literature generally. Again, whereas the use of such an expression as "sexual intercourse" would undoubtedly shock many people in the audience, it would certainly be permissible in the theatre

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of today, whereas the use of certain other words and expressions which have precisely the same meaning would result in storms of protest from the auditors and in the criminal prosecution of those responsible.

But the explanation of such distinctions I must leave to the psychologist and the ethnologist. Whatever the reason, the fact is that there are certain words and expressions which are generally regarded as unfit for public utterance. Many, but by no means all of these, are sexual in their meaning or connotation. Some relate to the anatomy and the physiology of the reproductive system; others to closely allied bodily parts and functions. Still others have no sexual significance whatever but are religious in their connotation. And there are even others, the exact meaning of which is obscure, but which, nevertheless, are taboo. (A curious example of the latter is the word "bloody," which may or may not be a contraction of the mediæval oath "by our Lady," but which, in any case, is considered highly improper in Great Britain. When the heroine of Shaw's *Pygmalion* uttered this word upon the London stage, it created a tremendous furor; but in America it made no impression whatever. An Englishman once said to me, "You know, there is all the difference in the world between a beefsteak bloody and a bloody beefsteak." He was quite surprised when I assured him that, as far as I and most other Americans were concerned, there was not the least difference in the world.)

Barrett Clark has spoken to me several times of a projected study of the gradual liberation of certain words from the limbo of the taboo. I hope that he pursues it, for it should prove a most valuable commentary upon the evolution of social customs, manners, and conventions. Words are quite freely used upon the stage today for the use of which the offender would have been jailed twenty years ago. It is not so long since the mere use of "damn" or "hell" upon the stage was enough to arouse in an audi-

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ence the laughter which is an outward manifestation of shock or embarrassment. (Their use in the movies has been proscribed by Will Hays.) I remember when, in 1909 or 1910, Clyde Fitch's posthumous play, *The City*, was produced and the expression "God damn" was used by one of the characters, it was something of a nine days' wonder; and such success as the play had was due, in part, to the fact that people were willing to pay money to hear spoken upon the stage an expression which they could hear gratis a hundred times in the course of a day's casual wandering about the city streets. Indeed, it is not the least curious thing about all these taboo expressions that almost everybody is thoroughly familiar with them and that they are frequently to be heard in the street, in the schoolyard and around the dinner-table. It is another evidence of the conservatism of the stage that it surrenders its reticences much more slowly than do its sister arts, poetry and fiction, or for that matter than do the individuals who comprise its audiences. As far as I know, no modern dramatist has attempted to reproduce faithfully the speech of persons in any class of society. It would not be possible to project, upon the stage, a literal transcription of such snatches of conversation as one may hear any day in a subway train, at a baseball game, in a college dormitory, or in some of our best drawing-rooms. Those who decry the "outspokenness" of the contemporary stage persistently shut their eyes to the fact that the theatre does not lead, but follows the popular trend of manners and conventions. Compared to the drama of a generation or two ago, the drama of today is remarkably free in its speech, but compared either to the drama of Aristophanes and Shakespeare, the contemporary writings of Lawrence, Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Frank Harris, Edgar Lee Masters, or Robinson Jeffers, or to the casual conversation of the man (and woman) in the street, it is restrained and hesitant.

We must turn now from the outward physical and
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verbal manifestations of the drama to a consideration of the subjective aspects: the thematic content and the method of treatment of this material. To begin with, we must differentiate between those themes which are *per se* taboo and those which are made suspect only by the manner of their presentation.

There are certain subjects, a mere allusion to which upon the stage would be regarded as highly improper and which are referred to, if at all, only in the most discredited burlesque shows and music halls. These include such distasteful subjects as bodily odours, constipation, menstruation, and "female hygiene," the mere mention of which will, no doubt, arouse in the reader a feeling of disgust. I enumerate them merely because they form the subject of innumerable widely-circulated advertisements of disinfectants, deodorants, sanitary appliances, and other commercial products. These advertisements are frequently cast in a fictional or semi-dramatic form, with drawings or photographs illustrating all sorts of unpleasant or embarrassing situations in which the "characters" may find themselves as a result of not using the advertised products. A fellow playwright and I once made a comparison of the content of such advertising matter, in magazines whose circulation runs into the millions, with the innocuous and infantile fiction in the adjoining columns. It would have been utterly impossible for any writer for these magazines to have even remotely suggested that one of his characters was afflicted with any of the ailments or physical disabilities so graphically described and commented upon in the paid advertisements. No dramatist has yet attempted to repeat upon the stage the "confidences" which are so publicly exchanged by the heroines of the advertising pages or to reproduce the window displays of any corner drug store.

There are, in addition, certain other topics, such as masturbation, venereal disease, and commercialized prostitution, and certain relationships such as miscegenation,

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incest, and homosexuality which are, or have been until very recently, regarded as subjects wholly unfit for discussion or presentation upon the stage, irrespective of the manner of treatment. Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Brieux's *Damaged Goods*, and Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* are outstanding examples of plays which, although now more or less generally performed, were almost universally condemned when they were first presented, because they dealt with subjects which were deemed unfit for public discussion, however familiar they may have been to the individual theatre-goer. In fact, *Damaged Goods*, a dull and rather obvious tract, was something of a *succès de scandale* because it discussed frankly and at length the dangers of syphilis. Wedekind's *The Awakening of Spring*, a far more artistic work, dealing largely with the abnormalities of adolescent sexuality, is practically unknown to Anglo-Saxon theatre-goers, because of its subject matter, although the same subject matter is freely discussed in hundreds of modern novels and innumerable works upon psychology and education.

Miscegenation is a theme which is of peculiar interest to Americans because of its prevalence in the United States. For this reason, it is not surprising to find that the taboos run strictly against its discussion, especially south of the Mason and Dixon Line, where its practice is most widespread. There have been, however, in recent years, numerous plays dealing with the subject. Almost without exception, they have been trite, conventional, and pointless. Many of them deal idiotically with the idiotic theme of a man or a woman choosing a mate who is presumably white and then being confronted—after a decent interval—with a black baby. Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, while far below the level of his best work, is, I believe, the only moderately successful attempt that has been made to deal honestly and intelligently with a vexatious social problem.

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Incest, too, is a theme generally regarded as unfit for dramatic presentation, although it forms the substance of some of the finest Greek tragedies. (Unless I am greatly in error, neither the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles nor Shelley's *The Cenci* has even been licensed by the British Lord Chamberlain.) At any rate, I can think of no important modern play (other than *Mourning Becomes Electra*) which deals with this subject. A decade or more ago there was current a whole series of plays built around the situation of a respectable middle-aged citizen visiting a house of assignation and being conducted into a room which contained the shrinking and semi-clad form of his beautiful young daughter. This, however, was merely a passing fashion in dramatics and can scarcely be regarded as a serious attempt to deal with the problem of incest.

Quite recently the theatre has begun to pay attention to the problem of homosexuality, a subject which, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, is still rigorously taboo. When one considers the relatively large number of homosexual individuals who are engaged in one branch or another of the theatrical profession, it is not surprising that there evidenced itself, in the theatre, a tendency to throw emphasis upon this subject, as soon as the ever-changing *mores* made its introduction at all possible. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the last twenty years have seen the production of a great number of novels and poems dealing more or less openly with the subject, and of the accumulation of a mountain of scientific and pseudo-scientific treatises upon it, almost no one in the theatre has made an attempt to treat the subject in other than its sensational or scandalous aspects. Bourdet's *La Prisonnière (The Captive)*, which created such a furor a few years ago (and the presentation of which in New York resulted in the enactment of a law making the dramatic treatment of homosexuality "obscene" *per se*), is nothing more than the conventional French formula play, in which the wife's lover

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happens to be a woman instead of a man. This lover never appears, and by the simple process of changing a dozen pronouns from the feminine to the masculine gender, the play could be converted from a "daring" treatment of Lesbianism to a rather dull marital triangle. For the most part, the treatment of homosexuality upon the stage is confined to crudely obvious and altogether pointless allusions to the subject itself. At the moment, it is fashionable to introduce at least one such allusion into practically every musical show or farce, a mere reference to the subject being enough apparently to arouse in an audience the same sort of self-conscious and embarrassed laughter as is provoked by the utterance of taboo words or by allusions to certain parts or functions of the human body.

I come, finally, to that phase of this subject of sex in modern drama which it is most difficult to approach and which demands a far more exhaustive treatment than I can attempt here. I refer to those universal aspects of sex which are the very substance of almost all drama, as they are of life itself, that is to say, the love relationship in all its manifold forms, with the attendant problems of marriage, divorce, chastity, adultery, and the like. We deal here with a whole complex of problems, the acceptability of which depends largely upon the dramatist's treatment of his subject: that is, the animus with which he approaches it, the emphasis which he places upon it, and the moral or conclusion which he draws from it. A really searching study of this most provocative subject would require a detailed survey of the entire range of modern drama. I shall have to content myself, however, with a few generalizations, which may be taken for what they are worth.

For one thing, it may be said that we can find in the various national dramas a pretty good reflection of certain national traits and tendencies. Thus, we find the French drama dealing in the main with the dialectical, institu-

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tional, and ritual aspects of sex; the Teutonic drama (that is, German and Scandinavian) with the psycho-pathological and metaphysical aspects; the English drama with the sentimental and moral aspects, and the American drama with the sensational and journalistic aspects. I do not mean, of course, that these are hard and fast categories and that numerous exceptions cannot be found, but, in the main, they illustrate the focus of attention one is likely to discover in the respective national dramas. (It is interesting to note, in passing, that in contemporary Russian and Irish drama we find very little emphasis upon sexual problems; in this respect the plays of Synge and of Chekov —probably the two greatest modern dramatists—present a striking contrast to the novels of Joyce and George Moore and of Gorky and Artzibasheff.)

The next generalization I should like to make is that, on the whole, the treatment in the drama of love and marriage and their related problems has been, with a few notable exceptions, timid, conventional, orthodox, and banal. We may smile pityingly, as we recall how our grandparents stopped their ears in consternation against the thunderous slamming of the door of Nora Helmer's doll's house, but actually we are just as jumpy at any suggestion from across the footlights that marriage and monogamy are institutions that may be questioned, that innocence is a dubious virtue, and that the wages of sin is frequently happiness—although the world outside the theatre bristles with evidence that demands our attention.

In the main, the modern drama rings unwearingly its wearisome changes upon banal themes: the young lovers, whose trials find a blissful end in the limbo of marriage; the return of the prodigal husband; the foolish, but not too foolish, virgin; the light-headed young wife whose errant footsteps are happily arrested upon the brink of the abyss—in short, the canonization of bodily purity and the triumph of the institution of wedlock.

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It is most instructive to note in this connection that Bernard Shaw whose "heresies" set the world by the ears, not so many years ago, is actually one of the most conventional of dramatists. His characters talk brilliantly and at length of a thousand vexatious problems. They decry current morality and hurl paradox and invective at our most respectable institutions. But it is all talk. Their conduct is always scrupulously within the bounds of the established conventions. Indeed, in the whole long gallery of Shavian portraits I can think of only two characters—Mrs. Warren and Feemy Evans—whose conduct is anything but decorous and whose sexual behaviour would not win the approval of, let us say, Mr. Channing Pollock or Mr. A. A. Milne. Even Cleopatra is represented by Shaw as a rather mischievous, but essentially naïve and sweet young thing. His Joan of Arc is far removed from the lusty young wench of Voltaire's rather scandalous epic; and his democratic king Magnus finds nothing better to do, in the boudoir of his mistress, than to roll about on the floor. I admire Shaw profoundly, but I think his plays afford an excellent illustration of how easy it is to scandalize people in the theatre by the mere utterance of rather mild iconoclasms.

Certainly we find little evidence in modern drama of the profound and painstaking researches that have been made into the psychological and institutional aspects of the love relationship. Schnitzler's delicate, if rather sentimental, analyses of the emotion of love are apparently far too subtle for the average theatre-goer; Strindberg's dark metaphysics and mordant misogyny cut him off from all but a few. (It is quite remarkable that Eugene O'Neill, an ardent disciple of Strindberg, succeeded in his bitterly anti-feministic play, *Strange Interlude*, in taking by storm the most gynocratic country that the world has perhaps ever known.) Werfel and Wedekind baffle or bore their audiences. Granville Barker's *Waste* has almost never been

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performed. France continues to produce its quota of discussions of the sexual relationship, but more and more they tend to become exercises in geometry, one indistinguishable from another.

Summing it all up, at what conclusions do we arrive? They are, it seems to me, unmistakable. The serious modern drama in its treatment and discussion of sex is timid, squeamish, superficial, and conventional. Not only does it function upon a much lower plane of frankness and enlightenment than is represented by the views and the conversation of moderately intelligent adults and the body of scientific knowledge possessed even by the intelligent layman, but it lags far behind the other arts, particularly the related arts of poetry and the novel, in its attempt to deal sensitively, honestly, and profoundly with the problems of sex.

At the same time, we find that even when it is most patently and crassly pornographic, the theatre, in its sexual titillation and in its exploitation of the emotions of fear and shame, falls far short of the newspapers, the pulp-paper magazines, and the sales propaganda of respectable industrialists.

Nor is this surprising. The theatre, like the church, is one of the most conservative of our institutions. It follows, and does not lead, the crowd. Like the church, it is hostile to new ideas and yields to them slowly and reluctantly. But unlike the church, it does not find it necessary to justify its obscurantism by invocations of the supernatural. The theatre, at least, is honest enough to admit that it opens its doors to subversive doctrines only when it finds that it is good business to do so.

Chapter Five

MODERN BIOGRAPHY

by ERNEST BOYD

THE ART of biography seems to have fallen on evil times in England . . . With us the most delicate and humane of all the branches of the art of writing has been relegated to the journeymen of letters; we do not reflect that it is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as to live one. Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead—who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design? They are as familiar as the *cortège* of the undertaker, and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism."

These now familiar words of the most distinguished of modern biographers might be paraphrased to describe the antithesis both of their author, Lytton Strachey, and of the biographers against whom his prefatory remarks in *Eminent Victorians* were addressed. Describing the spate of so-called "modern" biographies, "novelized" lives, and so forth, one might say: "The trick of biography seems to have fallen on prosperous times in Europe and America. A most scholarly and subtle branch of writing has been relegated to the sex circulationists of letters; we do not re-

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flect that it is perhaps as easy to write a flashy biography as a cheap novel. Those octavo volumes with which it is our custom to vulgarize the dead—who does not know them, with their half-digested paucity of material, their ‘smart’ style, their tone of tedious superiority, their lamentable lack of taste, of real knowledge, of honest purpose? They are as familiar as the case histories of the psychoanalysts, and wear the same air of spurious, psychological profundity.”

In other words, the overemphasis of the sex element in contemporary biography doubtless explains in large part the current vogue of that branch of writing. People who have never troubled to read Dowden’s life of Shelley, devoured the *Ariel* of André Maurois, because the tangled love-life of the poet was presented in a more palatable form to readers primarily interested in scandal. Since Lord Lovelace presented the facts about Byron and Augusta, lives of Byron have actually become best-sellers. The mere hint of incest makes a dramatic success of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, with a public which never betrayed the faintest previous interest in the lives and works of Elizabeth and Robert Browning. It cannot be a mere coincidence that those figures from the past who most frequently and lucratively tempt the “modern” biographers are those whose lives can be served up with the sauce of sex interest. Charlotte Brontë’s passion for Héger is thus more stimulating than that of George Eliot for George Henry Lewes; George Sand or Chopin offers more tempting bait than Beethoven or Mozart. If the recent popular demand for biography were not largely determined by irrelevant considerations of a tacit or avowedly sexual character, we might expect to see it extended to lives intrinsically interesting, and for more general reasons. When the lives of Voltaire, Montaigne, and Frederick the Great evoke the same response as do those of Shelley, Byron, and Catherine the Great—then it may be possible to argue that we take now-

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adays a more genuine and intelligent interest in biography than did our grandfathers.

It is generally conceded that, at least in the English-speaking world, the jargon of psychoanalysis, if not the "discoveries" of that so-called science, has released some of our Anglo-Saxon inhibitions in facing and discussing the problems of sex. It is equally true that in the Latin countries, where greater verbal freedom and a more realistic general standpoint have always obtained, interest in psychoanalysis and its verbiage has been limited to specialists and has not invaded the vocabulary and consciousness of the literary world and its public. Consequently it is to English, German, and American biographers that we must look for such evidence as may exist of the development of sex in biography. France, it is true, is responsible for the "novelized" lives which are a peculiar product of contemporary biographical writing, two French publishers alone being represented by nearly one hundred such volumes, while another has specialized in a series entitled *La Vie Amoureuse*, dealing with artistic and political figures whose lives lend themselves to the treatment indicated by that title. But the two most popular and extensive series are by no means restricted to the amatory adventures or misadventures of their subjects.

In English the situation is very different. There was bound to be a reaction against the kind of official biography impugned in precept and practice by Lytton Strachey. It was equally inevitable that this reaction should express itself in the good old Anglo-Saxon manner, that is, by an assertion of the New Freudian Freedom in the discussion of sex. The "Damocles Sword of Respectability," which, Carlyle said, "hangs for ever over the poor English life-writer," ceased to hang, with results which are not the unmixed blessing claimed by the naïvely sophisticated. Too many people rushed in where Lytton Strachey had not

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feared to tread, but without first arming themselves with his sensitive imagination and scholarly irony.

One gets, admittedly, a certain amount of humour out of the contrast between the series of feminine biographies edited by Poe's English biographer and champion, John H. Ingram, in the eighties and that edited by Francis Birrell in the nineteen-twenties. Glancing at Mr. Ingram's ladies I find that the collection is called the "Eminent Women Series," whereas Mr. Birrell calls his the "Representative Women Series." The former chose Elizabeth Fry, George Eliot, and Maria Edgeworth, the latter, Annie Besant, Aphra Behn, and Lady Hester Stanhope, amongst others. The Victorian's ladies, somehow, have an aura of respectability. Mr. Birrell's, though Victorian or earlier, somehow lack that aura. Does that make Mr. Birrell a "representative" modern editor and Mr. Ingram merely an eminent one? In a sense it does. Mr. Ingram—perhaps a trifle superfluously but, nevertheless, courageously—rescued Poe from the alleged calumnies of Griswold, but he would hardly have approved of the eccentricities of Lady Hester, and he would have been amazed had anyone suggested Aphra Behn as an "eminent" woman. In brief, there was a Victorian point of view, and Mr. Ingram expressed it, not only in his attitude towards Poe, but in his choice of females deserving a place in his series. His two-volume life of Poe is, in some respects, of the type abhorred by Lytton Strachey, but did it do any more to enhance, diminish, or explain Edgar Allan Poe than Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch's painstaking story of impotent infantilism—or whatever the technical phrase may be for an individual who, for reasons of physical deficiency, has a mother-fixation and is attracted by very young girls? One seems to have heard of the commonest type of extrovert, the mother's boy, whose offences include almost everything save impotence and the love of unledged girls. How far does ignorance or knowledge of either of these char-

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acteristics detract from or add to a biography? Baudelaire's mother-fixation has lately rejoiced the inquiring minds of French psychiatrists, but that was not what repelled all the academic critics like Brunetière, Faguet, and Lanson, nor what led to his glorification by contemporary critics as academic as Professor Gonzague de Reynold of the University of Berne, or that most unacademic and earliest of his living champions and admirers, André Gide. Needless to say, no book on Baudelaire has ever been so promptly translated into English as *L'Echec de Baudelaire* by Dr. René Laforgue, which overemphasizes that subject.

Admittedly, there was an interregnum in English biography, between the great classics, Boswell's *Johnson*, Moore's *Byron*, and Lockhart's *Scott*, and our own time. Pre-Victorian biographers have claims upon us which are overlooked by those who confuse modernity with originality. In *The Development of English Biography* Mr. Harold Nicolson declares that "Moore represents the Boswell tradition somewhat diluted by the milk of caution," and that Lockhart "is the second greatest (I am sometimes inclined to think the greatest) of all British biographers." This praise from so highly qualified an adept in the art of modern autobiography as the author of *Some People*—a masterpiece amongst many more widely popular examples of inferior work—and of modern biography as *Tennyson*, *Verlaine*, and *Byron: the Last Journey* is a sufficient reminder that all is not biographical gold that is Freudian glitter. His own examples, no less than his own works in this field, disprove the notion. Hagiography, with which biography began, returned, as Mr. Nicolson says, in 1844, with Dean Stanley's *Life of Arnold*. It received sanction as late as 1900 by the inclusion of Tennyson in a series of "Saintly Lives" and was characteristically endowed with such masterpieces as Mrs. Kingsley's biography of her husband, "dedicated to the beloved memory of a righteous man," J. W. Cross's volume on his wife, George Eliot,

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and Lady Burton's incongruous apotheosis of the translator of the *Arabian Nights*.

In the modern reaction against Victorian hagiography there is noticeable that affecting superstition of our time, the naïve assumption that never before in the history of literature was there such frankness as ours. We have forgotten the furor created by Froude's publication of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* and of the *Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, two documents of quite un-Victorian candour. We, too, have our hagiographers, for, as Mr. Nicolson points out, "Victorianism only died in 1911." Robert Louis Stevenson may be cited as a typical victim of the hero-worshipping type of biography. When Mr. John A. Steuart, only a few years ago, dared to write unsentimentally of Stevenson's sex-life in general, and of his marriage in particular, the dovecotes of the Gosses and Colvins fluttered with an indignation equalled only by the diatribes of the Tennysons and Mrs. Oliphants against Froude. Gosse's life of Swinburne is a monument of smug discretion, and we have had to wait for a translation of M. G. Lafourcade's *La Jeunesse de Swinburne* in order to have in English a frankly "modern" analysis of Swinburne's sexual anomalies.

Nevertheless, it is to Sir Edmund Gosse that the literary historian must give credit for being the first in our day to break with the genteel tradition in biography. In 1907 his *Father and Son* was a revolutionary departure from the conventions, both in the son's treatment of his father and in the choice of a restricted period of years for biographical analysis. It had, of course, been preceded by Butler's infinitely more savage autobiographical study of father and son, *The Way of All Flesh*, with which it must be bracketed as a slice of Victorian family life. Neither volume pretended to deal with the sexual aspects of its subject, but both are landmarks in an evolution towards that freedom which contemporary biography enjoys. It was Lytton

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Strachey who finally emancipated the art from all its Victorian trammels. Yet, it is an interesting fact that he, too, was little concerned with sex, save in the case of Queen Elizabeth, whose title, "the virgin Queen," almost inevitably invited speculation of a pathological kind.

It is also a significant fact, for it raises the general question of the importance of sex in biography. Is it possible that we now exaggerate its importance? One may welcome the freedom of modern biography from hagiography while questioning its overemphasis upon sexual psychology. When Frank Harris was trying to make of his life of Bernard Shaw a volume comparable to his own ineffable and insufferable *My Life and Loves*, his victim escaped him by confronting him squarely with unromantic facts, thereby confuting prurient conjecture. "First, O Biographer," he writes, "get it clear in your mind that you can learn nothing about your sitter (or Biographee) from a mere record of his gallantries. You have no such record, in the case of Shakespear, and a pretty full one for a few years in the case of Pepys; but you know much more about Shakespear than about Pepys. The explanation is that the relation between the parties in gallantries is not a personal relation. It can be irresistibly desired and rapturously executed between persons who could not endure one another for a day in any other relation." And he adds: "I found sex hopeless as a basis for permanent relations. . . . In permanence and seriousness my consummated love-affairs count for nothing beside the ones that were either unconsummated or ended by discarding that relation."

Here we have the unusual spectacle of the subject of a biography definitely answering the question I have raised. Mr. Shaw is clearly of opinion that the part of sex in biography—not merely in *his* biography—is negligible. He even declares: "If I were to tell you every such adventure that I have enjoyed, you would be none the wiser as to my personal, nor even as to my sexual, history." From

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which it would seem to follow that even the sexual history of a biographer's subject is not to be explained merely by reference to the latter's sexual experiences. In other words, an intelligent view of biography may so far diverge from the current preoccupation with sex as to eliminate it altogether, as something wholly irrelevant.

Obviously the relevance of sex in biography must be largely determined by the character and temperament of what Mr. Shaw calls the "biographee," rather than by the more or less morbid prepossessions of the biographer. If Mr. Shaw, for example, had been the kind of man whom Frank Harris so fatuously alleged himself to be in *My Life and Loves*, what purpose would be served by recording the facts? By his own admission such facts would be irrelevant, since "gallantry is not a personal relation" and "sex is hopeless as a basis for permanent relations." Presumably it is precisely the permanent elements in the life of a human being which are of vital importance to the biographer. Consequently, the latter has to decide whether or not the sexual life of his subject is essential to an understanding of his career. Can that be decided arbitrarily, on the theory popularized by the Freudians, that we are such stuff as sexual psychoneuroses are made on, our little life is rounded with a complex?

Mr. Harold Nicolson holds that the preponderance of this point of view, of what he calls the scientific interest in biography, "is hostile to, and will in the end prove destructive of the literary interest." Biographers will cease to regard their work as a branch of literature and will approach their tasks as scientists. "There will be biographies examining the influence of heredity—biographies founded on Galton, on Lombroso, on Havelock Ellis, on Freud; there will be medical biographies—studies of the influence on character of the endocrine glands, studies of internal secretions; there will be sociological biographies, esthetic biographies, philosophical biographies." We have

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advanced since the days of innocence when Dr. George M. Gould's *Biographical Clinics* explained Poe and others on the ground of eye strain. Leonardo da Vinci has been reduced to a psychoanalytic case history—a rare gem of sex in biography—by no less a person than Dr. Freud himself.

In *Aspects of Biography* M. André Maurois queries both the feasibility and the utility of scientific biography. "Who is engaged at the present moment in preserving notes on the internal secretions of Einstein? Who is investigating the endocrine glands of Paul Valéry? Who is keeping a record of Bertrand Russell's dreams, so that the Freudian biographers may interpret them at a later date? And if all these points are not recorded during the life of the individual, they too are unique, irreversible, irrecoverable." Nevertheless, biography today does not hesitate to speculate upon matters—especially those of sex—which are not to be ascertained without the collection of such data as M. Maurois indicates. Even with such data it is open to doubt whether the portrait of the subject is thereby brought any nearer to us. In everyday life we are well aware that, despite all the glib talk of neuroses, psychoses, introverts, extroverts, complexes, and fixations, human relationships are as complicated, human motives as obscure, human conduct as irrational as in the days before this jargon was invented. Since all this psychological apparatus fails to help us to live good lives, why should it help us to write them?

There are, needless to say, biographers who are compelled to take cognizance of the sexual problem presented by their subject, when it is patent that such a problem lies at the very root of the latter's life and work. For that reason Gosse's evasions render his life to Swinburne of less importance than M. Lafourcade's, although he had all the advantages for the successful performance of his task, save courage. It can hardly be denied that a knowledge of Swin-

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burne, by the very nature of his poetry, demands information concerning the man's own sex-life. On the other hand, the work of an essentially cerebral type, like Mr. Shaw, stands independently of such information, for the reasons which he so cogently stated to Frank Harris. Had the man been otherwise, his work would have been different. Yet, some of our most clamorous advocates and exponents of frankness, biographical and autobiographical, have been known to object strenuously when one of themselves has been subjected to sexual analysis, as witness the protests against Mr. Middleton Murry's *Son of Woman*, the only enlightening study of D. H. Lawrence in a welter of portentous and hysterical sentimentality.

If ever a writer was preoccupied with sex to a point of pathological obsession, that writer was D. H. Lawrence. From the date of the suppression of *The Rainbow*, in 1915, until his death, exasperated admirers of his early novels, *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser*, *Sons and Lovers*, had wondered what strange mental disease afflicted him. One felt—and Mr. Murry, out of his intimate knowledge, confirms it—that the man's point of view was quite abnormal, that he wrote of nothing but sex, and that his diseased and warped mind made him about as qualified to expatiate on his favourite theme as an absinthe addict would be who, in his delirium tremens, discoursed of fine vintages. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* confirmed one's worst suspicions. Here was that rare thing, not to be found amongst the familiar *curiosa* and *erotica*, a thoroughly obscene book, in the original and fullest sense of that much-abused word. The reason for its obscenity, both as understood by Mr. John S. Sumner and in its original sense, becomes apparent when one discovers that it is a projection into fiction of all that D. H. Lawrence wanted to be and was not—an abject confession.

In it, to quote Mr. Murry, "Lawrence goes further towards imagining his physical resurrection. The figure of Annable, with which his novels began, returns in the figure

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of Mellors to end them. . . . The sexual youth of Mellors is Lawrence's own youth: there is scarcely an effort at disguise." Whereupon Mr. Murry quotes a passage which corresponds exactly to the ascertained facts of Lawrence's experiences with his wife and other women. The "suffocating," "wearisome" atmosphere—the adjectives are Mr. Murry's—of this preposterous travesty, while throwing a sharp light on Lawrence's pathology, renders the book as unnatural in its literary, very literary, half-measures of verbal realism, as in its angry misrepresentation of all human values. "Beyond this sexual atmosphere there is nothing, nothing. The world beyond Mellors and Connie is unspeakably grey, dreary, hopeless," Mr. Murry continues. "It is an utterly hopeless book, hopeless on the surface, with its simple and monotonous insistence that physical fulfilment is the be-all and end-all of human existence; more hopeless beneath, when we know that the one thing needful is, for Lawrence himself, absolutely and for ever unattainable."

Mr. Murry's book on Lawrence very definitely answers the question of the place of sex in biography. Here is the first life of a modern man of letters in which sex is of primary importance and which is written sympathetically, but without the reticences with which modern biographers reproach their Victorian predecessors. In different words, and apropos of a very different character, Mr. Murry echoes Mr. Shaw's complaint of the futility of exaggerating the importance of purely physical sex relations. The college manuals inform us that D. H. Lawrence owed much to "an unusual mother," a statement which takes on a peculiar significance in the light of Mr. Murry's revelations, for all the torments that racked Lawrence in mind and body appear to have been caused by a mother-fixation.

In his *Fantasia of the Unconscious* he specifically confirms his biographer's deductions. "A man," writes Lawrence, "finds it impossible to realize himself in marriage.

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He recognizes the fact that his emotional, even passional, regard for his mother is deeper than it ever could be for his wife. This makes him unhappy, for he knows that passional communion is not complete unless it be also sexual. He has a body of sexual passion which he cannot transfer to a wife. He has a profound love for his mother. Shut in between the walls of tortured and increasing passion, he must find some escape, or fall down the pit of insanity or death."

The dilemma was peculiarly Lawrence's; it is hardly to be described as more than exceptional, and is of no more and no less human value and application than any other disease. Its effect upon Lawrence was to colour and vitiate his entire work, to give us those sex-obsessed novels which proceed in an hysterical crescendo from *The Rainbow* to *The Man Who Died*, in which everything assumes a phallic significance. Lawrence's fate was a grievous one, and Mr. Murry is right, both on literary and human grounds, in lamenting it. Yet, even he, amazingly, can calmly accept Lawrence's statement, that "incest is the logical conclusion of our ideals, when these ideals have to be carried into passional effect," in the following comment: "That is his way of saying that the demand for love made by the modern mother upon the modern son, or the modern father upon the modern daughter, prematurely and viciously stimulates the child's passional nature, and so incapacitates it from entering into a true sex-relation. Further, even if, by the aid of psychoanalysis, a modern man realizes his condition: the talk of 'sublimation' is nonsense."

One might with more justice argue that this talk of "a true sex-relation" is nonsense, when it leads so far away from the emotions of millions of men and women, who are as unaffected by the Oedipus complex as they are unconscious of their vermiform appendix . . . until it (if ever) becomes diseased. What is a true sex relation? Must Dr. Freud define it, or shall we consult an impotent novelist or

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poet, a syphilitic philosopher? A true sex relation might be precisely that which Lawrence would have found in his mother, had ties of consanguinity not interfered. Neither his mother nor anybody else's is the only woman of her type in the world. His whole argument is one of the worst generalizations from a particular instance I have ever heard.

Thus we return to the question of the place of sex in biography. Where sex is an essential factor, the first thing to be decided is whether the case is pathological or not. If pathological, the biographer becomes the scientist, as defined by Mr. Nicolson and M. Maurois, and biography as a work of art, as a means of expression, ceases to concern us. Where sex is not pathological, its importance is slight almost to the point of non-existence. The happiest sex-life is one that has no history, and biography is neither more nor less concerned with sex than with digestion. Carlyle's indigestion, Gibbon's hydrocele, Napoleon's cancer, the erysipelas of Frederick the Great add not one cubit to our knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of these men. Many obscure persons have suffered similarly and many people of like stature have been free of such suffering. The tedious novels of George Sand are not a whit more interesting because of her encounters with Jules Sandeau, Musset, Pagello, Chopin, and the rest of that "necropolis," as an unkind lover called the "cemetery" of her heart. Nor is the tedium of George Eliot's novels relieved by the thought of her exemplary life with George Henry Lewes, and her courageous unconventionality has not prevented us from preferring the works of the Brontë sisters and of Jane Austen, whose lives seemed models of decorum.

"Some shallow story of deep love" may elucidate the lives of those men and women whom certain biographers delight to honour with ever-renewed attention. For many many years we have been diverted by the annual crop of

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splendid sinners, wayward women, ladies of joy, mistresses of kings, Regency rakes, and so forth. They are a popular alternative to murder mysteries, society gossip, and sporting news. Until recently these compilations purporting to convey the glamour of Nell Gwynne, du Barry, Madame de Montespan, or Lola Montez were merchandise and were not taken seriously. But nowadays we are bound to take seriously any breach of the seventh commandment, so we have begun all over again to discover—biographically speaking—that storks do not bring babies and that adultery has been for centuries one of the mainstays of civilized life. This is merely our post-war Freudian frolic. Sex in biography, as in life itself, is simultaneously essential and unimportant, save when nothing else of importance is afoot. The autobiographies of Mill, Newman, Gibbon, Herbert Spencer, Renan, dealing with the world of the mind and of ideas, are worth all the memoirs of all the Casanovas, great and small, real and imaginary, whose usually trivial exploits and conquests make one wish that more people had Mr. Shaw's keen realization of the fundamental valuelessness of such experiences as a commentary on life.

Chapter Six

THE ARTS OF ENTERTAINMENT

by JUNE E. DOWNEY

NIGHT in Provence, night and the soft flick-flacking of wings. From afar come in troops the night moths, the Great Peacock Moths "clad in maroon velvet with a necktie of white fur." They are drawn by an irresistible lure, a solitary female moth imprisoned in a wire-gauze bell-jar in a scientist's insect-laboratory. Where will one find a more charming drama of Nature's than this, as translated by Fabre, the naturalist, writing of the bombardment of his home by guests eager for the nuptial feast? Where a more delightful instance of the power of sex attraction in the world of nature? Or a livelier image of the patient investigation of the scientist who seeks to analyse the enchantment in terms of vision, audition, odour?

It is possible that up-to-date research, with its highly specialized laboratory technique, seems even more patient and more conclusive, if less poetic. Picture an albino rat facing an electric grill on the other side of which is another albino rat of different sex! How much measurable torture will he endure to reach her? Or she to reach him? Summarizing the pioneer attempt of Professor Moss, of George Washington University, to measure the strength of the sex drive by the shock obstruction

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method, Professor Diserens of the University of Cincinnati writes:

Ten white rats, five male and five female were obstructed from reaching a sex object by a 28-volt shock. The results of the study . . . show that two of the five males overcame the obstruction to reach the female and three of the five females overcame the obstruction to reach the male. Aside from demonstrating the sex drive to be stronger in the female than in the male the results show the sex drive to be equal to a 28-volt resistance.¹

What delightful precision! Sex drive equated with exactly a 28-volt resistance!

Such pioneer work has, however, been subjected to strong criticism because of its failure to employ hundreds of subjects instead of a bare handful (for the albino rat is a highly individualized creature) and because of its failure in exactitude! Receptivity of the female and aggressiveness of the male must also be measured for each experiment as well as the strength of the electrical obstruction that fails to separate or succeeds in doing so. Always the latter result may be attained for—to put the matter in the scientist's nutshell—the optimal intensity of electrical shock has a greater incentive value than has the optimal intensity of any sex object. Love, it seems, is not the strongest thing in the world after all. Electricity is always able to go it one better. No wonder the modern metaphysician is eagerly poking about among electrons in search of the *Ding-an-sich*. In any case, it is quite certain that the old philosopher who so wearily concluded that there is nothing new under the sun had not read the new book by Warden of Columbia, *Animal Motivation Studies: The Albino Rat*, for here for the first time in history we have graded the relative strength of different drives as determined by the number of times the animals crossed an electrified grid to get to the incentive. The strength of

¹ *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 28, 1931, p. 32f.

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the drives rated from greatest to least was as follows: maternal, thirst, hunger, sex, exploration, an order of rank which may prove disconcerting to the Freudian.

Man is not, however, an albino rat, hence, the matter of quantifying human drives is still a problem for the scientist. Novelists and playwrights have, to be sure, recorded observations in some thousands of books anent the persistent circumvention by lovers of the exigencies of storm, hunger, irate parents, powerful rivals. Assuredly Romeo knew something of love as an incentive, although Capulets and not an electric grill separated him from Juliet—an observation, however, quite irrelevant from the standpoint of the statistically-minded psychologist who is no respecter of anybody's opinion—even Shakespeare's—and demands proof of every statement in terms of noses counted or hormones isolated. Very ingenious, moreover, is he proving himself so that we may confidently expect him to invent devices accurate in the *n*th degree for measuring the relative strength of various human drives. Some day we will know the electrical equivalent of a red-haired, hot-tempered guardian, or of a moonlit, perfumed southern night. But this lies in the future. In a present-day discussion of sex and art one must fall back upon less progressive approaches, even upon speculative opinion—so abhorrent to the objective scientist.

That the relationship between sex and art must be close appears obvious from the resemblance between art forms and courtship activities as found among both animals and primitive races. Passionate preludes to mating, bird-songs and bird-dances might well be thought of as infra-human forms of art although auditors and spectators must be denied capacity for æsthetic judgment and the theory of sexual selection discarded, at least as a biological theory. A great pity—this abandonment by scientists—since the notion that in the course of millenniums man created

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woman and woman created man raises the nice question—so eminently suited for debate—as to which has done the better job of the two.

The extravagance of Nature with respect to plumage, colour, ornamentation, and motor activity during the mating season induces the belief that organic exuberance must have direct or indirect relationship to sex activities. It is likely that the outflow of surplus vigour accompanying sexual maturity accounts for much pre-nuptial dancing and singing in the springtime of life among both animals and primitive men and that male display arouses emotional response in the female. Certainly the purpose of many such activities appears to be to serve as an excitant, to stimulate organic energies in the service of the reproductive demands of nature, and to break down the barriers between individuals. Certainly sex wooing and sex combat have furnished raw material to art. This is especially true in the arts of the dance, the pantomime, and the theatre. And on the farther side of combat and courtship activities lie the sex rites of the Great Mother—religious ceremonies often phallic in nature, the worship of the generative principle itself, a worship which has also enriched the arts, particularly the plastic arts. Note Rodin's "The Hand of God."

Now is not the occasion for a discussion of the origin of the several arts in connection with sex activities except to say that assuredly one of the roots of art is sex, and that art receives much of its raw material from activities akin to those of courtship. A rhapsodic identification of sex with all manifestations of life and art is tempting but solves no problems. Moreover, as Hirn has so aptly put it:

Love, although fundamentally one and uniform as a feeling, is, in its utterances, ever changing with changing conditions of life. If its ground is biological, its nuances are always determined by sociological influences.¹

¹ *The Origins of Art*, p. 240.

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In other words, it is *assumed* and not necessarily *actual* sex characters that are potent and the social *mores* set our ideas of such characters. Fashion reigns here as elsewhere. How romantically provocative a fainting heroine may be depends upon the world calendar. Once Venus' dove-drawn chariot would have been summoned by lover's sleight-of-hand; nowadays a hospital ambulance is a more likely sequel. Certain present-day novelists are experimenting on the degree to which they can exchange so-called sex characteristics and still produce acceptable romance.

As part of an investigation into the origins of art one would need to study both dissociation and irradiation. On the one hand, the method by which activities originally sexual began to serve other purposes and, on the other, the irradiation of whole fields of life by the energies of sex. Scott writes,

The sexual instinct in its irradiation upward and through its increasing dominion over the higher senses and the brain, has given rise to a distinctly æsthetic capacity, capable of appreciating the beauty of form, color, movement, and sound, issuing in whatever way from the bosom of life and expressive of its sweetest harmonies as well as of its depth and power.¹

Sex motivates art; but art also motivates sex. This double relationship should not be forgotten.

Nowadays, psychology makes much of the so-called conditioned response, that process of association by means of which almost any stimulus may come to serve as a substitute stimulus for the biologically adequate stimulus to a reflex or emotional response or, inversely, almost any biological response substituted for another. This principle has been used to conjure with, to shunt emotions and reactions at will from one sphere of influence to another, so to speak. Actually, in the laboratory, conditioning is an intricate, delicate, and slippery process and the present facile appeal

¹ "Sex and Art," *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 7, p. 178.

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to it in non-experimental psychology, tempting though it may be, may some time be halted by the experimenter himself. Until, however, he drives us out of his realm we may speculate at will upon the broadeld of human conditioning and note the apparent irradiation of whole realms of life by human erotics. The difficulty will be to know where to draw the line. There is no apparent limit to the creation in such a way of sex symbols or sex fetishes. Love's gardens as well as those of death are crowded with memorial stones, decorated with serpents, swans, rings, falling showers of gold.

All this may be granted without paying too much attention to the theories of the psychoanalytical schools. It is, of course, well known that Freudian psychology assimilates art creations to those of dreams, both being conceived as safety-valves for thwarted sex wishes; both using symbols in order to mask their hidden significance. Hence the psychoanalytical probing of the artist's life—Freud's attempt to read in the face of *Mona Lisa* maternal fixation in the early life of Leonardo da Vinci and Ernest Jones's interpretation of the tragedy of *Hamlet* as an instance of the Oedipus complex. Or the Adlerian view has prevailed and poetry, drama, and other arts are thought to reveal the human struggle to overcome inferiorities, to assert the will to power. As an illustration one may instance Kaiser's interesting study of drama and his analysis of *The Merchant of Venice* as designed to show by ring episode and otherwise how Antonio prevailed over Portia in the love of Bassanio; or his exposition of *Cyrano de Bergerac* as a recognition of Cyrano's dominance revealed by the success of his masked wooing of Roxane.

Psychoanalytic material is so subjective in nature, so little accessible to experimentation that the experimentalist views it askance. It has, however, undoubtedly contributed to our understanding of a number of problems of person-

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ality and of art; hence, its appeal to many of the literary guild.

Another view, not as yet accessible to exact experimentation, is the belief that creative work of whatever form is dependent upon energies aroused by sex hormones and mechanisms. Marston writes:

Perhaps it is too sweeping a statement to say that all great works of art have been produced as an expression of passion response to some woman, real or imagined who has strongly captivated the artist. But I can say that in all the cases where I have had opportunity personally to observe and to analyse male artists' emotional responses, I have been able to establish beyond reasonable doubt that passion for a woman or women (sometimes imaginary women) is the *sine qua non* of artistic creation.¹

Who dare assert that the statisticians may not enter this field and tabulate the motivating loves in the lives of composers, dancers, and the like? They may even develop a formula for love-excitation as they have for social distance or racial prejudice. They may teach the critic how to equate George Sand with a Chopin nocturne or Henrietta Smithson with a Berlioz symphony.

More spectacular even than statistical investigation may prove to be modern contributions to sex chemistry, for sex nowadays is understood in terms of an internal secretion. Possibly specific and practical applications in the field of art creation may be made. The biochemist may discover how to shift physiological gears deliberately so that poet, artist, musician, and dramatist may speed at will up or down Mount Parnassus.

The late Dr. Slosson, speculating on this interesting topic, writes:

It seems, then, that we must regard sex, with all it means throughout the range of animate nature, with all its influence on the development of art, literature, morals, and social life, as essentially a chemical affair, regulated, repressed, stimulated, or reversed by minute amounts of certain definite compounds in the blood or food. Experimentation is already active in this field and none can foretell how far it will lead.

¹ *Emotions of Normal People*, p. 355f.

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And again,

One of the dreams of the alchemists, the transmutation of the elements, has recently been realized, and another is already in sight of fulfilment, the love philter that has frequently figured in romance and opera, such as "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Tristram and Isolde."¹

Much of art content is so obviously erotic, at least in its effect, whatever may have been the conditions prevailing in the creation of it, that it would seem sufficient to discuss this aspect of it and to ignore subtle implications concerning its origin or its utilization of masked meanings. Beyond any question both compensatory make-believe and vicarious satisfaction of desire motivate enjoyment of the plots of the movies and delight in the ballet or the solo dance.

No illustrations would seem necessary, but with reference to the stage the opinions of two male psychologists are worth recording. Professor Dunlap, of Johns Hopkins University, writes:

Details are too lengthy to introduce here; but in brief, the types represented by the show girl and the dancers are necessary to give the chorus (the foundation of the show) the widest appeal to the males. This is a fact of practical importance to producers, and I have found no difficulty in obtaining abundant introspective confirmation from men of all classes. Some men are interested almost exclusively in the type of show girls who evidently would be splendid mothers; others are primarily interested in the types who are attractive in a more immediately sexual way. The great majority of men, however, are strongly interested in both types, and have little difficulty in identifying the grounds of the two interests. The stage, I may remark, is to social psychology what the laboratory is to individual psychology, furnishing the possibility of experimental tests, especially in the domain of the problems of the family. . . .²

Somewhat in the same vein Marston writes:

Some of the frankest and clearest-cut types of captivation of males by women are those accomplished by chorus girls and dancers. . . . The

¹ "The Expansion of Chemistry," Reprint from *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, Vol. 16, p. 447.

² "The Significance of Beauty," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 25, pp. 191-213.

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girl on the stage, in strict accordance with the nature of captivation emotion, observes and analyses the male emotional mechanisms to the best of her ability (or the theatrical producer does this for her); and she practices assiduously to stimulate these male mechanisms in such a way as to evoke, through them, the maximum amount of pleasure in the male.¹

Reports from women psychologists are not available, but the suggestion has been made that the frequent fascination exercised on women by the dancer is due to identification with the latter. Perhaps the feminine spectator shares in the joy of captivation of the male, even though only by proxy.

It is quite possible that some of the curious problems relative to the psychology of dress (or undress) that have so preoccupied anthropologists and sociologists might receive illumination from study of stage costuming, particularly in music revues where frequently one finds a reversion to primitive motifs. The older view that dress is an outcome of sex modesty has yielded to the notion that its origin lies in a desire to increase attractiveness, to "accentuate what technically it conceals." The effect of a novelty in facilitating the attention and hence charming an observer is well known in the advertising world and apparently also among savages who distinguish marriageable individuals by such singular devices as blackened teeth and conspicuous nosepins. Novelty can make the short skirt provocative in the day of the long draperies and confer allure upon voluminous veiling when meagre garmenting is à la mode. Bare-legged and bare-footed dancing which to the unaccustomed may appear quite shameless may seem simplicity itself to others and suggest sheer beauty of movement untrammelled by clothes or at most enhanced by blowing scarves of gauze.

Bizarre novelties are common in the revue. Oddly enough, in the march of the centuries much male plumage

¹*Emotions of Normal People.*

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has gyrated to the head-dress of the chorus girl, and Peacock Alley has been usurped by femininity in borrowed furs and feathers. General and diplomat have, however, refused to surrender permanently their epaulets and parti-coloured decorations although willing at times to lend them out—if worn with a difference. Even Napoleon has on occasion slipped his cocked hat and mannered pose to the ballet, perhaps amused by the irrelevance of such dainty parody.

There is a sociology as well as a psychology of clothes, for the latter are carriers of prestige and symbols of caste. There may also be an aesthetics of clothes, a matter of play of line and colour. All of which complicates the problem of sex and its garmenting and makes pronouncements by censors and moralists very precarious.

Sociologists have recently conducted experiments on stereotypes, by which they understand crystallized social meanings which may be embodied in mental pictures. It appears that the general public has a set idea as to what a labour leader or a financier, a Bolshevik or a United States Senator should look like. Such "typical" faces exist too for stage characters and particularly for film heroines and film lovers. And yet, even so, personality must be individualized and uniformity of sex dress and appearance cut by some distinguishing feature, a matter thoroughly understood by successful actresses and actors.

Lanier, poet and flutist, has declared, "Music is Love in search of a word." But certainly sex appeal in music is much more recondite than sex appeal on the stage unless, of course, music be accompanied by words as in love songs. It seems, however, to many observers that rhythm and melody may in themselves evoke erotic emotions. Surely the effect of the Negro Blues is not wholly dependent upon the accompanying words, charged though the latter may be with sexual suggestion. Nor is it wholly subjective to assert that Strawinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* reveals

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creative passion, but that Mozart's *Concerto in E Flat Major* is sexless in quality. Moralists such as Plato and Tolstoy have, in fact, been so impressed by the possibilities of sex stimulation by the rendition of music that they have favoured strict prohibition of certain kinds of music.

In an experiment on the feelings and emotions resulting from music as a stimulus, Schoen and Gatewood found that in a series of 589 musical selections love was fourth in relative frequency in a list of eleven emotional effects. The list of emotions was composed as follows in rank from first to last: sadness, joy, rest, love, longing, stirring (emotion), dignity, amusement, irritation, disgust. These investigators found considerable similarity in the emotional reactions to certain musical selections and great consistency in the response by a given individual to a particular musical composition. Various musical selections certainly produce a great variety of effect, and much of this variety in effectiveness must be laid to the content of the music itself.

It is interesting to note that, in general, investigators find that specific erotic associations with music are largely a matter of the individual listener. Dr. F. L. Wells among others has demonstrated how highly subjective is the character of music symbolism. Different temperaments react very differently to the same musical selection. Dr. Wells concludes,

The man who hears in the final bars of the *Second Hungarian Rhapsody* the starting of a freight locomotive has a different make-up from the one to whom the *Fifth Nocturne* of Leybach images a sunlit mountain snowslide.¹

The author instances the fact that Tchaikowsky's *Romance* arouses sexual feelings for some although he himself had always regarded it "as an apt musical rendering of the flat and colorless Russian steppes."

It is possible that very detailed biographical investiga-

¹ "Musical Symbolism," *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 24, p. 76.

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tions would give us some notion as to what emotions composers have sought to put into their compositions. To a slight degree information might be obtained by a comprehensive listing of titles for particular composers. Certainly one would find a great number of compositions compounding some form of the word "Liebe" (*Liebestod*, *Liebesträum*, *Liebesfreude*). Because, however, the prolific composer is apt to list his work under the convenient heading of Opus No. So-and-so, it would be necessary in a comprehensive investigation to dig deeply into the chosen musician's life and confessions and into his notes on his musical work in order to determine what had been the inspiration of his music and what the content he thought he was embodying. Musical critics have, to a certain extent, done this very thing for a few composers, but not with the mathematical intent demanded by modern statistical science.

There has been a tremendous amount of work carried out on the experimental psychology of music so far as concerns its organic effects upon the auditor, but none of this work refers specifically to music and sex. If one could determine just what music is decisively erotic in its appeal and then use this music in certain physiological investigations, some curious material might be accumulated, for it is a well-known fact that music influences physiological reactions profoundly. A great number of studies have been made relative to this point, such as the increase or decrease of muscular energy, of bodily metabolism, of respiration under musical stimulation. Dr. Hyde, of the University of Kansas, studying the effects of music upon electro-cardiograms and blood pressure, concluded that "cardio-vascular functions are reflexly stimulated concomitantly with psychological effects of music" and that such effects might be utilized in sensitive individuals so as to produce a "favorable influence upon the muscle tone, working power, digestion, secretions, and other functions of the body." To

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repeat, it would be interesting to extend such investigation to determine the degree of sex stimulation by music.

Another interesting experiment, which has never been carried out so far as I know, would be the determination of the degree to which the timbre of various musical instruments conveys the idea of sex. To the author at least, the piano seems a sexless instrument, the cornet decidedly masculine, and the cello doubly-sexed. Is such symbolism purely individual? Possibly associations with the human voice are operative here. Certain it is, that through association or conditioning, sex quality of a very intensive sort seems inherent in the human voice as shown by the symbolism attached to soprano, tenor, and bass voices. Again, few stimuli are more exciting than a singing voice that is highly sexed but ambiguously so. A voice running the gamut from bass to high soprano has a thrilling hermaphroditic allure unique in quality.

It is likely that in the near future, as an outcome of radio broadcasting, the attention of the public will be turned to the sheer auditory quality of the human voice and its capacity to express emotions through pitch, timbre, intonation, and volume. A recent book, *Voice and Personality*, by Professor T. H. Pear, of the University of Manchester, has, in fact, reported upon an extensive experiment on the "Radio-Personality" in which five thousand listeners co-operated. This personality, it should be recalled, must be conveyed wholly by way of the voice. Some very interesting material was gathered through this experiment. The author comments entertainingly upon Voice-Stereotypes and upon sex appeal in the radio voice, relating this to the deliberate cultivation of sex appeal in the film. He instances the discussions that have appeared concerning the attractiveness of the "husky" voice of certain actresses and adds:

A man's attitude toward such a voice in a woman, who is decidedly attractive in other respects, may be interestingly "ambivalent," as the

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psychoanalysts would say—and about this they could probably say much. . . .

Again,

One frequently hears that a man has an effeminate, and a woman a manly voice. Here we must distinguish between a judgment made merely upon pitch (for anatomical reasons a woman's voice is usually higher than a man's) from one made upon psychological characteristics, such as the centrally lisped "s" or the feeble "r," of the kind which their utterers "could help if they tried." [He concludes] There seems to be a normal amount of sex difference in voices, since one can detect anomalies.¹

Dunlap, in an article cited previously, reduced all human beauty to biological terms. In his analysis he considered, item by item, each physical feature in an endeavour to show the survival value of each preferred characteristic for each of the sexes. Stature, type of features, bodily proportions, complexion, muscular tonicity—all were shown to have biological significance. An analysis of sex-appeal into such elements would be scientifically and, perhaps, æsthetically interesting. Even the voice with sex appeal might be found to be a voice vibrant with vitality and love of life. Still the problem might prove more complex than appears upon the surface. How, one wonders, account for the charm of the thyroid voice in woman, low-pitched and thrilling, allied perhaps to the "husky" voice of which Pear writes? And certain types of visual beauty have also been known to be associated with physiological disturbances. The Pre-Raphaelite Beauty has excited considerable interest in the medical expert from other than an æsthetic angle.

It is probable that dancing makes frankest use of sexual charm as the very stuff of which the art is made; that music employs rhythms and timbres which may be fundamentally erotic but the nature of which is not easily accessible to analysis; and that drama specializes to some degree

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 32.

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on romantic adventure involved in the acts of sex wooing and sex combat.

Many motion picture plots are primitive love stories, embodying either the rites of courtship or often a fight between rivals reminiscent of the combats between sex opponents in forests and streams—elk locking horns with one another or gorgeous fish battling to the last bloody fin. Certainly the Wild West plot focuses the combat interest. Sex conflicts, between husband and wife, lover and mistress, abound on the screen; as well as naked presentations of the lust of the flesh.

Within recent years psychologists have realized that the motion picture offers a rich opportunity for experimental work. It may be used as a life-like material for testing memory and for grading the reliability of testimony on exciting and evanescent situations. It may also be used by the social psychologist to determine what social attitudes exist in various groups and the degree to which such attitudes may be deliberately modified by way of other films.

It has been shown, for example, that many popular stereotypes for national types are movie creations; children get their notion of Irishman, Italian, and Englishman from representations on the silver screen. Recently Dr. Thurstone, of the University of Chicago, has been able to use his attitude-rating scale in such a way as to measure a change in social attitude toward the Chinese on the part of children in two comparable schools. The children's attitudes toward the Chinese were first measured. Motion pictures were then shown, favourable to the Chinese in the case of the children of one school, unfavourable in the case of the second school. Retesting showed that the children of the former group had changed their attitude favourably; in the second group they had changed in the opposite direction. Dr. Thurstone has also reported that the film *Street of Chance* which describes the life of a gambler, actually influenced children in such a way that after seeing

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it they regarded gambling as a more serious evil than they had previously. On the other hand, the film *Hide Out* was found to have had no measurable effect upon the children's attitudes toward bootlegging or prohibition.

H. E. Jones and Conrad have reported some interesting material on rural preferences in motion pictures. They stress the difference in reaction to film pictures in different communities and show the value to producers of knowing just what sort of reaction they might anticipate from diverse groups. There is here, of course, a wide field for work, which is just being opened. None of the investigations so far touches upon the subject of this paper, namely, motion pictures in relation to sex. To be sure, Jones and Conrad included love stories in the list of kinds of pictures with regard to which children were to express their preferences. Only two-tenths of one per cent of the children voted for love stories—a great contrast to their interest in western stories. Since, however, nearly all pictures contain a love element of some kind, it is possible that this feature is regarded as incidental rather than primary.

Interested in determining the degree to which college students would react favourably toward the love plot, I asked a class of some twenty to list as many motion picture plays as they could easily recall as impressive and to state their reasons for listing each. Of about two hundred plays listed less than ten per cent were cited as liked because of the romantic or love element. Humour, mystery, life-likeness, scenic background, historic detail, or war interest were frequently mentioned as preferred effects; above all, a fascination for plots embodying fear and horror was expressed. But little emphasis was placed on sex interest! Obviously, however, many of the listed plots had a strong love strain so that one wonders why such a film as *Svengali*, for instance, would be listed many times and not once referred to as a love story? Is the love element taken

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for granted? Or is the modern student less ingenuous than he seems?

To answer this question a second series of questions was prepared. The same group was asked to rate love stories relatively to other types of motion pictures and to name several films with a love plot. They were also asked whether they preferred the love element to be the major or the minor interest in the film and to name a number of plots where it was (a) major and (b) minor. They were also invited to name pictures with no love plot and to state their own reaction to such films.

One very interesting result was the statement by a number of young people that they did not like the love-making to interfere with the movement of the plot in a movie; "The story's the thing!" Percentages show, however, no lack of preoccupation with romance. Of the two hundred movies previously listed, one hundred fifty are found again under the new captions. And the new classification shows that 46 per cent of them are listed as having love as a major interest, 37 per cent love as a minor interest, and only 16 per cent as lacking all love interest. Of course, such a summary has little real numerical value except as checking the significance of the former returns and showing the extent to which romance actually figures in the movies in spite of the apparent overlooking of it. But nearly 70 per cent of the students explicitly stated that although love should be a motive it should not usurp the plot. It is, they asserted, a subsidiary matter in the more elaborate and entertaining films.

Quite likely, as one student—an amateur dramatist—stated, sex interest in the movies is much less a question of plot and story than it is a matter of sex appeal, as exhibited by actors and actresses apart from their rôles. Psychical distancing, or that curious objectifying of emotions in art in such a way that the personal becomes impersonal without losing its emotional appeal, has not been carried very far

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in the movies. There is none of the remoteness of the pedestalled and marbled Venus di Milo about the vivacious Hollywood stars, except in the case of the few artists who create atmosphere, withdraw subtly even in a close-up, and maintain that reserve which is the secret of true art. The real problem of the movies as possibly a baneful influence appears to me to be found in just their failure to create psychical distance—in that, and in the substitution of sentimentality for genuine passion.

In any case the perfecting by Thurstone and others of the technique for measuring social attitudes suggests that a great field for work may be found in determination of the sex attitudes set by various films and, possibly, by specific actors and actresses. The investigation would be a big one and would be expensive in execution since it could be handled only by experts in social statistics who had at their disposal both the films and the populace needed. But the results might prove of overwhelming social value. And there is no other way of obtaining real knowledge of the influence upon the public of various types of film. Reliance upon the subjective judgment of a censor or group of them is an attempt to rest on shifting sands. Why run such a risk now that mathematical measurement of social products is possible?

Rhythm would appear to be the common basal element in the three arts of music, dancing, and the motion pictures, and it is possible that there are certain fundamental rhythms basal to sex excitement. Marston has shown in his *Emotions of Normal People* that the rhythms associated with hunger have constituted a teacher for men of certain rhythmic patterns which are used in many different situations. In the same way, it is possible that there are rhythmic sex activities which might furnish a pattern to be used in various arts. Genius, alone, would seem able to penetrate the secret of such fundamental rhythms, such

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organic resonances, to make them contribute greatly to æsthetic experiences. Strawinsky accomplished this in his *Sacre du Printemps*. Some genius may achieve as much for the motion pictures—select and utilize in magnificent fashion the very rhythms of life.

Chapter Seven

MODERN DANCING

by TED SHAWN

DANCING has always had a greater sexual stimulus than any of the other arts. Since the body of the dancer is his instrument of expression, even more than that of the actor or the singer, and since the human body is itself of sexual interest (especially when the performer is a sexually desirable person), the dance must, of necessity, always have a certain sexual potency. It has been the recognition of this element of the dance—that of the power of the living, moving human body to arouse sexual desire—that has caused most of the censorship against the dance; but almost never has there been censorship of the dance on the ground of its subject material. And yet in the modern art of the dance, as compared with other forms of legitimate theatre art, there have been far more freedom, fearlessness, and variety in dealing with sex themes.

Compared with modern fiction, in which the ultimate of sexual frankness seems to have been attained, the dance as well as modern drama have not gone nearly as far. Dancers or actors are living flesh and blood, and the arts of the theatre as a whole deal more directly with life itself than do any of the other arts. Thus what can be written about cannot yet be publicly performed. For writing

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about sexual "sins" is pure art expression, whereas the performing of such sexual acts even though in the service of art is yet necessarily something actual for the performers, and thus becomes, in the eyes of the censors, the very "sin" itself and not the mere expression of it.

That the dance has been able to deal with sex more freely than the legitimate drama is due to the fact that suggestion or symbolism through movement is more difficult to apprehend than are definite spoken words. And a considerable proportion of the sexual themes of the dance are so treated. Furthermore, the art of the dance today reaches a selected audience, infinitesimally small in numbers compared to that of the legitimate drama, and is thus considered of less danger by the censors. Were a production of the dance art, dealing with sexual themes, to appear in a Broadway theatre and have a popular public success, I do not doubt that the censors would soon be in evidence.

In our modern art of the dance there are three main trends: the American, beginning with Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis and continuing on down through the whole Denishawn movement; the Russian, beginning with the romantic revolution of the Diaghileff Ballet; and the German modern movement, begun by Rudolph von Laban and continued by his disciple, Mary Wigman. Since this article deals with the *art* of the dance, I will not discuss ballroom dancing, folk dancing, nor the religious cults of the dance still in existence among savage peoples and in the Orient. Since it deals with the dance art *today*, I will not go into the past history of the art of the dance except as it has immediate explanatory value to what is now being performed. Since the chief sexual stimulus of the dance comes from the body of the dancer and the movements of the body, and from the sexual themes treated in the dance, I will treat of these three main trends of the modern dance art from these two standpoints.

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THE AMERICAN MOVEMENT

At the time of the almost simultaneous beginnings of the careers of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, the artistic quality of the dance was at a very low ebb. The old classic ballet had degenerated into an artificial and stilted performance, and aside from the ballet one saw dancing only in the musical comedy and the vaudeville stages. This was largely a matter of high kicking and acrobatic stunts, tied together by a routine of a very limited vocabulary of "steps." On the basis, however, that what is hidden and suggested is more exciting than what is completely revealed, the dance of this period—thirty to forty years ago—was of greater aphrodisiac power than most of the dancing that one sees today.

The women's corseted figures were garbed with voluminous petticoats, and the steps of the dance revealed sudden and exciting flashes of silk tights and underclothes. Yet the clergy and censors have always felt that the human body itself was sexually alluring, stupidly overlooking the fundamental fact that the mystery, only occasionally and swiftly revealed, kept the elements of sexual curiosity alive much longer than even complete nudity. Thus the famous "Black Crook" Ballet, which appeared only in full-length tights, aroused a storm of invective from those powers who felt themselves self-appointed to protect the public against sexual enticements.

An examination into the newspapers of the first years of the appearances of Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan who discarded corsets, skirts, stockings and shoes, and appeared in what then seemed almost complete nudity, reveals that most of the gentlemen of the press were unable to consider anything but the amount of epidermis exposed, and yet strangely enough in spite of the fixed idea that nudity was itself a sexual stimulus we find that the performances of these two pioneers were rarely, if ever, criticized—that

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is, as far as the dancing itself was concerned—as being immoral. The ban was entirely against the displaying of the nude body.

The subject matter and motives of this new movement were as far removed from sex as they have ever been in the history of the dance.

Isadora Duncan in her life, as revealed by her own writings and the books of others who were intimately associated with her, was a person of extremely free and liberal ideas in regard to sex, and her life experiences included almost an infinite variety of sexual experiences. Some people have hailed her as a prophetess of a new dispensation in regard to sex freedom, while others felt that she was abnormal, almost to the point of being a pathological nymphomaniac. However, in spite of this force running fiercely and wildly in her private life and emotions, sex almost never came into her art product.

Among other things, Isadora rebelled against the quality of music used by dancers prior to her time, feeling that even in the ballet music of the great operas the composers had "written down" to the ballet. She believed that the cosmic quality of what she had to express through the dance was such that it needed the accompaniment of the greatest compositions of the greatest masters. She took the symphonies of Beethoven and other works of that calibre and to them she danced themes as abstract and as universal as the music itself. She was wind and waves and the night sky, but never once was she a mere woman expressing the sex lure of womanhood. Even when she used lighter music, such as the "Blue Danube Waltz" of Johann Strauss, she gave a quality of eternal and cosmic spring-time. It was virginal and fresh and yet impersonal, and when she danced the "Marseillaise" she was the personification of the heroism of a whole nation. Yet even in her last appearances, especially here in America, there was censorious criticism in regard to the nudity of her body,

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and in one instance where she exposed one bare breast, there resulted almost a scandal. Just as no one, except a professional muckraker, could find any sexual stimulus in the Nike of Samothrace or in the Venus di Milo, so was there none in the dancing of Isadora. She brought back to life the Greece of the great tragedies, the Greece of Phidias and the Parthenon.

Just as Isadora Duncan turned to ancient Greece for her inspiration, so Ruth St. Denis turned to the Orient. At the time she began her career Oriental dancing was associated in the public minds of Europe and America with the *danse du ventre*, the "hoochy coochy" of the Midway Plaisance of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. Ruth St. Denis went to the religious cults of the Orient, where dancing was an austere and sacred ritual and discipline. In "Radha, The Dance of the Five Senses," clad only in a few jewelled metal plaques over her nude brown body, she performed a mystic ceremonial which taught the Buddhist doctrine that yielding to the senses leads to despair and death, and only by renunciation can one reach spiritual attainment. In these dances of the first ten or twelve years of Ruth St. Denis's career, the theme was always religious and the performances had the atmosphere of consecration such as one associates with a dedicated priestess. Here again the nudity of the body was considered so shocking and of itself so indecent that for many years the critics discussed only that, and never the art of the dancer or the spiritual content of the subject matter of her dances. This was more especially true in the United States, but even in Germany in 1908 she was forced to appear before a committee of the city fathers privately in her "Radha" costume for them to decide whether or not her performance would be subversive to public morals. On the other hand, the critics in Germany were much more ready to recognize the quality of the performance, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote: "It borders on volup-

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tuousness, but is chaste. It is consecrated to the senses but is a symbol of something higher." And in England, Mark Perugini (author of *The Art of the Ballet*) wrote "Always the glamour of the East, but without its menace and without its vice—the East exalted and austere."

In 1913 Ruth St. Denis produced at the Fulton Theatre in New York two dance plays which might be said to be the first introduction of erotic subject matter in her work. Both of these were based upon stories of Lafcadio Hearn. In "O-Mika," a Japanese dance play, the story tells of a Buddhist monk who in a vision is told that if he will go to the house of a famous courtesan he will there see the goddess Kwannon face to face. The courtesan O-Mika, danced by Miss St. Denis, is entertaining her Samurai guests with the accomplishments of flower arrangement and tea ceremony when the monk arrives, and because through his purity of vision he calls forth the goddess within every woman, the courtesan becomes transformed into the Kwannon.

In "Bakawali," a Hindu love tale, Miss St. Denis as an apsaras, a heavenly dancer in the court of Indra, having fallen in love with a mortal, dances so beautifully before the King of Heaven that he grants her any wish. She asks that she be allowed to go to earth and live with her lover. Indra, angered at being so tricked, grants her wish, but decrees that the lover shall be turned to stone from the waist down, and if her love remains true for twenty years, he then will be restored to his full powers. The last scene of this play shows the end of the twenty years and Bakawali's reward for her long fidelity.

In both of these it may be easily seen that the erotic stimulus is slight and the religious influence still uppermost.

In my own work in the years prior to my association with Miss St. Denis there has always been a strong romantic note, a whole-hearted acceptance of sex in all its fullness as being natural and right. My own greatest influence,

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from childhood, has been the *Leaves of Grass* of Walt Whitman. Thus from 1914, in the joint productions of Miss St. Denis and myself and the Denishawn Dancers (a name coined from a combination of our own two names) there has been a balance of the religious, Oriental theme of Miss St. Denis, the impersonal "music visualization" themes of Isadora Duncan, and the American Whitman-esque themes of my own work.

One of the earliest joint productions was a dance drama based on the *Indian Love Lyrics* of Laurence Hope and called "The Garden of Kama." Kama is the East Indian Eros, and in this production the theme was of the unconquerable power of sex desire treated in a semi-realistic, semi-symbolic character.

In the logical development of Ruth St. Denis's interest in the religions of the Orient she ultimately arrived at the theme of the goddess Ishtar, the Babylonian Aphrodite. In this production, against a background of an Assyrian temple, with its shrine of Ishtar, there were enacted the legends of this goddess, including the sexual rituals supposed to have been performed in her temples. These were treated so symbolically that only the erudite were aware of the real significance of the performance. Had the police censors been sufficiently educated they would certainly have forbidden the further performances of this ballet dealing with sex as worthy of religious worship and ritual.

As a matter of fact, no censorship has ever been applied to the dance on the basis of erotic subject matter, but only on the question of nudity, and this, too, has been largely a matter of geography even in the United States. Boston for many years insisted upon all the female members of our company wearing tights or full length stockings, but though I myself appeared only in a brief loin cloth there seemed to be no objection to male nudity.

About 1916, in an interview which was widely syndi-

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cated in the United States, I stated that within ten years I would be able to dance completely nude, "as far as the canons of art permitted" (by which I meant the apparently necessary fig leaf in the case of a man's body) before the general public, and entirely without offence. In less than ten years this prophecy was fulfilled by me in a sculptural dance in which the body was whitened, and in which I wore a white rope wig and white fig leaf. This dance I performed well over a thousand times in large cities, in small towns, and all through our tour of the Orient. Never once did the dance receive any unpleasant comment.

In 1929 at the Lewisohn Stadium in the city of New York before audiences totalling about fifty thousand people in three nights, I produced two dance dramas of very definite erotic content. One was based on the much discussed *Jurgen* of James Branch Cabell, and included a scene of very obvious sex symbolism—the breaking of the veil in the court of Anaïtis. The other one, "Death of a God," was based on the minotaur legend of ancient Crete, in which I impersonated a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull, who chooses amongst the maidens who enter the arena as bull baiters one to be his bride. In the ballet the victim kills the bull god at the moment of the consummation of this monstrous marriage. These ballets were received with genuine acclaim by a very popular audience and the erotic content received no mention whatsoever in the press reviews.

Often I have found in the folk dances of native peoples of the world the raw material out of which to create an art dance. A number of years ago I was in Cuba and going out into the districts not frequented by tourists, I saw the dance which is performed by the Cuban negroes called "La Rumba." This is a dance of primitive courtship, of enticement and pursuit, and culminates in movements which are rhythmic dance representations of actual sexual inter-

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course. I was attracted by the lazy insolence with which it is performed and by the music of the Cuban orchestra which has since become so popular all over the United States and Europe. I made out of this raw material a duet dance with one of the girls of my company, and used a phonograph record of the native music which was projected from the stage with radio amplification. Although I had made a chorography which had architectural form and dance-pattern lacking in the original source, the rank physical sexuality of the dance was unchanged. By an unplanned chain of circumstances that dance had its first public appearance at the Boston Opera House for a charity benefit, sponsored by a long list of Boston's most conservative families. Yet this dance was so enthusiastically received that an encore was made necessary, and has since continued to be one of the most popular numbers of my repertoire.

On no one of the Denishawn programs has there been a predominance of erotic motifs, but each program is planned to incorporate themes dealing with all of the important motives of human existence—religion, labour, sport, and love. By presenting sex as a necessary and right part of the wholeness of life, neither stressing it unduly nor avoiding it, I find that it meets a definite hunger on the part of all types of audiences. Both the sexual stimuli of beautiful athletic nudity and of themes dealing with sex through its whole range (from romantic idealism to frank unashamed animal desire) legitimately give pleasure and release to the beholder.

THE RUSSIAN BALLET

The Diaghileff Ballet in its first great years seemed to have an almost exclusive concern with erotic themes. One of the most famous of the ballets, "Scheherazade," presented a situation in which, during the absence of the Sultan, keys of the harem were stolen and all the male slaves of the palace gained access to the women, with the

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inevitable result. At one point, the stage was literally filled with couples lying about on couches and cushions whose movements only stopped short of actual sexual intercourse. In both "Cleopatra" and "Thamar" we had the familiar theme of a Queen who, having possessed the man as a lover for one night, kills him in the morning—both loving and killing being done in full view of the audience. In "L'apres midi d'un faun" the audience was treated to the spectacle of the faun's sexual caressing of the lost scarf of a nymph whom he had desired but could not catch. In "The Legend of Joseph" they gave us the old familiar story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar. Most of the other ballets of this period (which were not, like "Les Sylphides," carried over from the classic period of the ballet, or like "Petroushka" and "Soleil du Nuit" based on Russian folk dancing) had romantic or sentimentally erotic themes.

In the last period of the Diaghileff Ballet the general tendency was toward bizarre and grotesque "modern" effects and the erotic, while still in evidence, was subordinated in the search for novelties.

The ballet as a style of dance was first evolved in Italy and later grew to its greatest heights in France, and was then imported into Russia; but it was not until after the influence of the two great American pioneers, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, had been felt in Europe that the Russians really came into their own. The wild half-savage Russian temperament rebelled against the sentimental prettiness of the French and Italian ballet and in this rebellion they produced their greatest work. It was in these greatest works that the rich, colourful eroticism was predominant.

THE MODERN GERMAN MOVEMENT

Although the German people had constituted a very intelligent and responsive audience for Duncan and St.

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Denis and for the Diaghileff Ballet, until after the war Germany had produced no dance art of her own. However, within the years immediately after the war, a dance movement came into being in Germany which has grown rapidly and has not only made itself felt throughout middle Europe but throughout almost all of the Western world.

Partly due to the unique emotional condition of Germany during the war and the post-war period, and partly in rebellion to the ballet style in which the native German dancers have never been able to excel, a new movement of "abstract and absolute" dance came into being.

Rudolph von Laban, having studied the ballet as a child, then having observed the religious and ecstatic dances of the Orient, and later having become a disciple of a pupil of François Delsarte, started to experiment with forms of dance which had up to that time not been seen in Germany, although these forms had—unknown to him—already been developed here in America. Mary Wigman, who had studied with the Jacques Dalcroze School of Eurhythmics and later with the Wiesenthal sisters of Vienna, heard of von Laban's work and joined him. Out of the collaboration of these two came the whole widespread interest in the dance art in Germany.

Of all of the present-day phases of the dance, the German "abstract and absolute" dance has the least sexual content. It prefers not to deal with any theme that is dramatic or narrative, almost never deals with a theme that could, by any stretch of imagination, be called a love theme or erotic, and the costuming and postures of the body are the least sexually stimulating of any of the forms of dance known in the world today. There is a certain resentment and antagonism in their attitude toward traditional forms of beauty, and this is shown in their rejection of the crisp, decorative lines of the ballet, the flowing

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lyric lines of Duncan, and the exotic Orientalism of St. Denis, in favour of an aggressive and angular type of movement.

In their schools they refer to their training as "tanz gymnastik" and there is a very strong affiliation to physical culture, gymnastics, and athletics, not only in the training methods but in the performances themselves. They emphasize strength as against beauty, primitive rhythms as against melody or harmony, and in the choice of themes go as far from human emotions as possible. The result is a dance art that is sexually sterile. At the Third German Dance Congress which took place in Munich in June, 1930, there were two different programs each day for a week, in which over five hundred dancers from all Middle Europe took part. A small part of these programs was furnished by the traditional ballet dancers giving the old classic ballet themes of sweetness and sentiment. The large majority of the dancers were those directly or indirectly influenced by Rudolph von Laban and Mary Wigman, and from this section not one erotic theme was presented, nor one even remotely romantic. This phase of the dance practically parallels that of the "abstract" painters and sculptors in modern graphic and plastic arts.

A famous London obstetrician after examining Epstein's sculptural work entitled "Maternity" stated that the woman depicted was not pregnant but was suffering from an abdominal tumour. Recently a young dancer, obviously under the modern German influence, presented a dance under this same title. Here the woman depicted seemed to need the services of a psychiatrist rather than those of an obstetrician. However, these "left wing" modern dancers constitute only a small part of the modern dance artists.

The dance concert field has grown tremendously in the last five years not only in America, but also in Europe. And it is in the concert performances that the dancers present their most serious new creative work. While now and

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then a serious artist of the dance secures an engagement in a revue or in vaudeville, in the main this field is dominated by the tap dancers, the lines of girls doing "precision" dancing, or the "adagio" teams, and thus the revue field need not be discussed from the point of view of the art of the dance. Significant, however, of the sexual difference is the fact that the revue producers use the dance frankly as an aphrodisiac, and engage dancers largely from that point of view. While in the dance concerts one is never conscious that the audience is especially stimulated sexually—at least not excited or overstimulated.

In ninety-nine out of every hundred plays on the legitimate stage, the theme deals with sex, with romantic love, or situations involving human desire in some form. The sex or love theme plays fully as large a part in the themes of modern fiction. Whereas in the modern art of the dance, sex and romantic love as subject matter are found in less than one-third of the dances—"abstract" themes, religious and metaphysical ideas, character studies, and purely technical virtuosities filling the other two-thirds of the programs. But the excitement of insistent rhythm, the beauty of dancers' bodies that are sexually desirable, the oneness of the dance with all of cosmic creativeness combine to sustain dancing as the most sexually stimulating of all the arts.

Chapter Eight

THE MOTION PICTURES

by STRUTHERS BURT

AT ONCE, and to begin with, reserving explanation until later, I would like to make a statement which will seem on its face a gigantic and absurd paradox. There is, in any broad and human sense, practically no such thing as sex in the motion pictures, and that is one of the principal charges, perhaps the principal charge, to be brought against them. Sex is a touchstone. A wrong attitude toward it conditions the entire point of view.

Having said this, I would like to record a personal protest. I wish the word "sex" had never been invented. Or at least, I wish that it had never come to be used as it is nowadays, and in this I think most honest men engaged in the profession of writing will agree with me. I think most honest men and women of all descriptions will agree with me, but the misinterpretation of the word sex works an especial hardship upon writers because they, more than other artists, must deal directly with sex.

Generic terms, particularly those having to do with the emotions, are dangerous except in the mouths of the thoughtful. They are especially dangerous in democracies such as this country and England where the use of words is widespread, but discrimination in their use is, as a result,

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filtered thin. The term sex as it is now used is too easy and too comprehensive. And being too easy and too comprehensive, it not only loses its definitive powers but eventually tends, like all vague generalizations, to set up a wrong concept in the minds of the users and to cheapen the thing it so largely and inadequately attempts to describe. It would have been better had we been forced to use circumlocutions to express the multiform aspects sex may assume. For example, the relationships between men and women, clumsy and inadequate as that is in its turn, is a far sounder phrase. At least it brings to mind an image of infinite variations, edged with nuance and mystery. There is, for instance, except in its simplest terms, no description so little defining as "sex appeal." Just what does it mean? The prize fighter may have sex appeal and so—without any "may"—had Goethe. The word sex should have been confined to its scientific, primary sense; its biologic and anthropologic sense, for when you begin to talk about men and women you are not talking about dogs, elephants, or flowers.

Generic terms become at one and the same time both too hampering and too releasing. They become battlecries. On the lips of the unthinking, sex used in this way is a weapon of reaction and, on the lips of the equally unthinking, but those who happen to be on the other side of the fence, it is a weapon of a confused, and confusing, liberalism. So we have the spectacle of a son of King George of England announcing, on the one hand, that decent people are tired of sex, while, on the other, we have a furious accentuation of Dos Passoses and Faulkners and Aldous Huxleys, whose young people react only to two things: drink and fornication. Meanwhile, the vast mass of the nation, which does not think such things out, but which forms its character largely by a series of vague, succeeding impressions, is being subjected to a bombardment the only end of which is to convince this mass that

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sex, without qualifications, is completely biological and completely uninindividual. This bombardment ranges all the way from pornographic magazines, far exceeding in their number those published in France, and, incidentally, far less artistic and funny, to the motion pictures which, under the stern eyes of Mr. Hays, the churches and innumerable boards of censors, invariably choose, when possible, the most suggestive name they can for what is usually almost too innocent a performance and flood the country with posters that follow the names and not the performances. Look over any list of motion pictures and see what you find. *The World and The Flesh. But The Flesh Is Weak. Man Wanted. Merrily We Go To Hell. This Is The Night. Love Starved. Careless Lady. Lady With A Past. Sinners In The Sun.* And so on, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Impelled by that dark imp that is in all of us, do you go under the impression that you will see a gay and salacious performance, or, on the other hand, being serious-minded, do you anticipate some honest comment on a persistent problem? In either case you will be mistaken. There will be no honesty one way or another. You will see a picture that subscribes to all the whims of innumerable censors, but which winks its eye and peeps through key-holes whenever it gets the chance.

But we must go back, and start once more at the beginning.

Nowadays it needs little argument to prove the assertion I have already made that the attitude toward sex of a man or woman conditions the whole outlook of that man or woman. It is no longer necessary to tell people that sex is one of the three or four most important things in life and one of the three or four most permeating. Indeed, to the contrary, it has perhaps become necessary to tell them that, although sex is one of the three or four most important things in life, it is—possibly—no more important than the other factors in this exclusive category. A

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few years ago under the tutelage of Dr. Freud, and under the compulsion of those mysterious mass movements which predicate the thoughts of different periods, we believed sex to be prepotent, but further research has led us to modify this belief. We are now willing to admit that there are other primal instincts such as the will to power and the will-to-survive, and many of us are inclined to agree with Dr. Adler that the will to power is frequently the strongest of all and that passion and love are more governed by the will to power than is the will to power governed by passion and love. However that may be, sex, as I have said, still remains a touchstone and is certainly the sharpest angle from which to view any personality; the angle the main features of which are most clearly outlined, although its subsidiary features, of course, are most in subtle shadow and mystery. Furthermore, it is the angle most easily recognized by everyone. Even the dullest man and woman are aware of sex and know something about it, rightly or wrongly, and think of sex, however ignorantly and horribly. It is probably the one subject about which, at some time or another, everyone has indulged in articulated thought, whatever confused nightmare this articulation may represent.

But what applies to a man or a woman must of necessity apply to any medium which deals with men and women; any medium such as a book or a play which depends for the most part, no matter how much this may be hidden, for its interest upon the relationships between men and women. There are very few examples of the graphic arts which manage to evade this circumscription; here and there a picaresque novel such as *Treasure Island*, here and there a poem which is completely descriptive and avoids even a simile which touches that electric button of memory, anticipation, and essentialness which is sex. As far as plays are concerned, I never heard of one which did not, however obliquely, connect men and women. Even

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in such a play as *Journey's End*, where there are only male characters and the protagonist is war, there is, if you remember, and very distinctly, the shadow of a woman in the background. And this is altogether right and natural and as it should be. Before you can hunger or thirst, or achieve any will to power, you must first be born of a woman, and before you are born of a woman, some man must have loved that woman or have been moved by one or more of the various minor emotions which go by that name. In short, whether or not sex is invariably prepotent, it is at all events invariably permeating and conditioning.

Now I do not intend to go into the endless argument as to whether the motion pictures are an art or a business. Or, to put it more correctly, whether business comes first and art second, or the other way about, for, as all sensible people know, there is to any art which survives a business end. As far as I am concerned, I cannot see how the motion pictures can be anything but an art, but that is neither here nor there. I will simply make a statement that admits of no discussion: the staple of the motion picture, just as it is the staple of the novel and the play, is men and women, whether their relationship is that of mother and son, brother and sister, husband and wife, or lover and beloved.

As a course in *kulturgeschichte*, and as an eye-opener as to what millions of the young and untrained are reading and, to some extent, modelling themselves upon, one should every now and then glance through those curious conglomerations of megalomania, ignorance, and shrewdness, the motion picture magazines, some of which, I believe, have become as much a thorn in the flesh of "the industry" as they are an alarm to intelligent citizens. Thus, for example, one year reading at random, we discover that for the next twelve months sex is to be in vogue again. Evidently you can predict sex as you can the coming of Christmas and New Year. There is about it none of the

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uncertainty of the stock exchange or the weather. Therefore, we come upon a concise little article entitled, "Taking Off Their Clothes," the first paragraph of which says: "They aren't even wearing beads any more, because beads rattle in the microphone; therefore it looks like a nude year for the Tired Business Man of Prairie City, as well as New York." But that was three winters ago before we realized that we were in a depression, and now sex "is out," the American public is "tired of sex," sex is being "soft pedalled," the nicer people are fed-up with sex, as the Duke of Gloucester has said.

This is interesting if true, and one is inclined to send cablegrams, or telegrams, at once to Bertrand Russell, Mrs. Sanger, Drs. Freud, Jung and Alexander, and Eugene O'Neill. Perhaps the insane asylums should also be warned. My own opinion is that throughout the history of the human race, to judge by results if nothing else, the interest in sex has remained fairly stable.

The motion picture monthlies, being more or less trade journals, although trade journals read by the public, can exhibit an intimacy which would be bad taste on the part of "the industry" itself. Also, unlike "the industry," they have escaped the censors. But we do not need them to tell us what the fundamental attitude of "the industry" toward sex is, and this attitude is that sex is a commodity. In that one word you have the gist of the whole matter.

Sex is a commodity. All right, let's think that over.

If sex is a commodity, then life in all its relationships is a commodity. And if life in all its relationships is a commodity, then we have merely a succession of material possessions the end of which, as we all know, these possessions being bought, used, and discarded, is an unlivable boredom.

But sex is not a commodity. Or rather, it cannot be a commodity save biologically. And even then, correctly viewed, it is not a commodity but a scientific fact. As a

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commodity you have no real sex whatsoever in its broader and more interesting aspects, and certainly you have no trace of it in its artistic aspects. At the best, you have merely a momentary sensory elation and that, as is well known, is a perfect example of impermanence. There has been nothing created by the human mind that so cruelly, logically, and swiftly reduces sex to a *reductio ad absurdum* as the harem, save it be perhaps a succession of divorces. Biological sex is large, impersonal, does not consider the individual, and, in the last analysis, is inhuman. Sex humanly, and therefore artistically, considered, is confined, personal, and highly individualized; of infinite variations. Sex biologically is a piano; sex humanly is the intricate compositions played upon it. Sex biologically takes no note of the personality; sex humanly starts with that as a premise. There is only one instance where biologic sex can be purely biologic and also artistically and humanly interesting, and that is where, as war was in *Journey's End*, it is a great protagonist against which individual men and women contend. Otherwise it is the material of a scientific brochure, and scientific brochures, as we know, are not widely appealing. The man of humane tendencies and training, and therefore, it goes without saying, the artist, invariably attacks the problem of sex from the point of view of two or more individuals who are enmeshed in a set of circumstances which, because these people are individuals, in just that much differs from any set of circumstances that has ever occurred before or will occur again.

The scientist attacks the problem of sex without the slightest consideration of whether eyes are blue, brown, or green; the merchant of sex has only one gong although upon this he rings many changes. He removes, either actually or by implication, the clothes of his commodities, male or female, and expects only the simplest and quickest of reactions. Tacitly he agrees with the French proverb that

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in the night all cats are grey. Moron or wit, sinner or saint, gunman or aristocrat, to him all men and women function identically alike and, exercising practically no discrimination, have no interests save the interests confined between those singularly unindividual and anonymous regions, the umbilicus and the knees.

Biological love—although this phrase is a contradiction in terms—admits of no variations which have not been known since the world began. Adam and Eve discovered them. And even in the beginning these variations were extremely limited. With all his ingenuity and his undoubtedly earnestness and desire for discovery in this direction, man is incapable of adding anything new to the sexual act, but as I have said, the full and rounded relationships of men and women are as susceptible to mutations as is the musical scale.

Sex cannot be a commodity artistically and humanly speaking. Perhaps the starker example of this is prostitution. The gravest charge against prostitution is that it is a libel and uninteresting. It does not live up to expectations, and it cannot. It is exactly as if you offered to sell in the market-place any other deep and essential human emotion: the relation between mother and son, a father and daughter, a sister and a sister, a brother and a brother. That is why the prostitute, as such, has always been an almost impossible heroine, not because she is what we call immoral but because she is—as a prostitute—inhuman and, technically speaking, inartistic. If you will consider any novel or play which has a prostitute as a heroine, you will find that almost invariably the novel or play either indicted society or else the prostitute individualizes herself by falling in love with some one out of office hours, as it were.

Do not misunderstand my intent. As a professional writer, or, if you choose to put it that way, an artist, I am not interested in so-called morals. I am supposed to be

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interested only in life, but the curious thing is that if you are an honest artist you cannot possibly escape from those higher morals which can only be described by the old phrase "a sense of values."

In other words, I am interested in this question of sex in the motion pictures because the motion pictures are a great medium, exercising an immense influence, and if their point of view is perverted on such a fundamental question, then it shows that their entire sense of values is at fault and it also shows a widespread perversion on the part of the public; a perversion that is continually being reinforced by the motion pictures. On which side the perversion started, I do not know. Probably, as is usually the case, it began to manifest itself simultaneously, but now it has become a matter of action and reaction continually increasing in accent, and artistically and humanly the road being followed is the road of artistic and emotional death.

This is not too strong a sentence. Perhaps the most shocking and disturbing feature of modern life to the thoughtful is not modern action, for action is much the same throughout the centuries, but the increasing callousness of a supposedly enlightened era toward that action. The whole struggle of history, and therefore, one can say, of life, has been toward an increasing awareness of life, or, to put it another way, toward an increasing sharpness of reaction. This awareness is the one thing which distinguishes man from the other animals. Obviously this awareness, and even then still in only a partially developed form, is the possession of merely a minority, but the hope of the future rests in the slow growth of this minority, and there is no hope if this minority is overridden and blotted out by the majority. The artist, and therefore the man of humane instincts, is not, for instance, so much shocked by murder, shocking as murder is, as by present-day gunman methods and attitude. People are wiped out as one wipes

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out a fly and with probably less awareness. The artist is not in the least concerned as to whether a woman sleeps with a man, but he is mortally concerned if the woman is unaware, either for rejoicing or repentance, that she has done so. He is not shocked by anything morally except in the broad ultimate sense I have mentioned, which is that if you destroy awareness and the ability to react you eventually produce an insensitiveness which in its turn produces a boredom that destroys life. And it is this boredom which today is the gravest problem the world has to face. The nerves of the world have been so overstimulated, so played upon, so titillated and pandered to, that they have ceased to react. The thoughtless, and that means the vast majority, are restlessly bored; the thoughtful are alarmed.

Such a situation produces in a medium like the motion pictures certain immediate and practical damaging results. A bored audience becomes too bored even to continue to be an audience. Screaming announcements reach a crescendo and a use of adjectives beyond which they cannot go. We have witnessed the same phenomenon in advertising generally.

To understand this nexus in which the motion pictures now find themselves it is necessary to consider briefly their history. This history is unfortunate. The motion pictures are the only medium dealing with men and women which started as a science and fell immediately into the hands of business men, and have never yet been in the control of men and women with the viewpoint of the artist, or, to repeat, have never yet been in the hands of men and women who regard life in all its manifestations as an object for study and research, and honest reporting, and not as a commodity, bad or good, to be manufactured and sold to the public by every means known to high-pressure salesmanship. It was from this initial split in its personality that the motion picture became the unfortunate

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hybrid that it is today, and the psychoanalyst knows that a split personality is liable to all manner of nervous disorders, especially those of sexual maladjustment.

The motion picture today is a monster; its head is scientific, its belly is commercial, and only its feet—and these are of clay—are artistic.

It is not necessary to go far afield, or to delve into motion picture history, to find examples to support my thesis. More or less current productions confirm it. I have already mentioned a few modern titles. Obviously they are born of the psychology of the peep-show, with, however, the show left out. But the show itself, battling with censorship, does, none the less, in this direction the best it can. I will not dwell upon such primitive salesmanship as the fact that it is now almost impossible to see a motion picture in which, some time during the course of the production, a lady, usually entirely adventitiously, does not remove as many clothes as the censorship boards allow. I understand that in motion picture circles this is regarded as "realism." It is when they attempt to deal with emotion in its higher sense that the motion pictures exhibit their entire ignorance of what emotion is. Let us take for example that elaborate picture, *The Shanghai Express*. It centres upon the willingness of a lady to save her lover's life by sacrificing herself to the lust of a Chinese bandit general. For years this lady has been a notorious prostitute on the coast of China and has devoted her talents to building up her reputation, and yet we are asked to react sympathetically to her quandary. Incidentally, the lady has plunged into a life of prostitution for no greater reason than that she was misunderstood by this lover, but in the end she bobs up as the dear sweet girl she always was. In other words, nothing that you do has any effect upon you. In *Alexander Hamilton*, a serious production, a love affair which occupied several years of Hamilton's life is condensed into a night or so, and is carefully prepared for

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and explained by the fact that before the lady appears, Hamilton has had a drink with a French friend. I think this is a degrading estimate of a great man's character and would lead the innocent spectator to believe that either the Fathers of the Country had singularly weak heads where liquor was concerned, or else that they never drank a toddy in the presence of a lady. In that fine picture in which the frigate *Constitution* was the hero, just as the pirate fleet was coming up full sail and about to go into action, the human hero, against the will of the scenario writer, was forced to embrace his love on the quarterdeck. A fine breeze was blowing and the lady had on the light garments of the period. The audience saw more of the lady than it did of the pirate fleet. Billy the Kid was sent over the Mexican border, to marriage and, no doubt, a happy life with a woman who never existed in his historically documented life, and the man who affectionately patted him on the shoulder and sent him, was Pat Garret the sheriff who, in real life, killed him.

But there is no point in multiplying instances. It is almost impossible to go to a motion picture which, analysed, does not show this entire disregard of emotional realities in an effort to sell life and people as commodities. Here and there is an honest picture written as honest plays and honest novels are written. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was such a picture, so was *Outward Bound*. When the motion pictures do this they have a vast power for moving drama. It is curious they do not realize the value of this, commercially if in no other way.

How are honest plays and novels written? It seems absurd to be forced to explain such an ancient and common bit of knowledge; knowledge which is instinctive with the honest artist. Yet anyone who has had anything to do with the motion pictures knows that the men who control them do not even understand what the artist is talking about. They think he is lying or putting on style.

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It is exactly as if the artist were trying to talk to a fish or some other creature that functioned in a different medium. He cannot even convince this species of listener of the other equally ancient and common bit of knowledge, which is, that honesty of intention and real emotion, or, that is to say, passion, are the only assurances of a steady box-office, or a steady reading public. You have only to refer to Lincoln's immortal statement about fooling the citizenry to see the force of this. It is this lack of understanding which makes it impossible for the honest writer to function in Hollywood except for brief and purely venal visits. The motion picture world cannot understand why the dramatist and writer bother about such minor details as an honest approach to sex, an honest attempt to depict life as it is, or even historical or geographical honesty. The halls of Hollywood, but not so much now as formerly, are paved with the enthusiastic good intentions of writers who have just arrived, and echo to the footsteps of those who, after heart-rending experiences, are departing.

But although the honest artist knows that honesty of intention and emotion are the only possible sources of steady success, he never approaches his work from that point of view for he knows that if he did his point of view would at once alter. In other words, he is honest and takes his chances. Again it is the point of view that counts. Of course, it counts. It is the only question of importance. And so we come to the one canon of criticism which seems uncontradictable. This too is ancient and common knowledge to all honest and intelligent artists and to all honest and intelligent men and women, but it is not ancient and common knowledge to censorship boards or to the motion pictures.

At a recent meeting of the motion picture theatre owners of a certain densely populated state, one of the owners made the statement that it was not sex on the screen which, in varying degrees of articulateness and consciousness

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troubled the public, but the treatment of sex. For a motion picture theatre owner the speaker showed an appreciation of the obvious amounting almost to genius. From the beginnings of history the artist has known that there is practically no subject the artist cannot treat so long as he does so honestly, wisely, and humanely, whereas there is no subject, however fundamentally fine, which cannot be dishonoured by dishonesty, hypocrisy, and sentimentality. In short, it is the intention back of the treatment of a subject which makes for decency or indecency. We have already mentioned the lady on the screen who removes without rhyme or reason, and at any moment, her clothes. (Well, naturally, Mr. Hays, only down to her step-ins.) Let us take the lady in the bathtub. Or, since we are modern, the showerbath. In such a dilemma there are just two artistic and honest solutions. Either, like the Victorians, you imply that so far as you know ladies don't take baths, or else, being of your generation but also honest, you have them publicly in baths only when that shows something necessary to your story and therefore is an integral part of it. Sex as paprika, as seasoning, is indigestible and eventually dulls the palate. Ladies in bathtubs adventitiously are indecent. The French have a word—*voyeur*—for those who take too much their stimulation in this fashion.

Titillation is also an ugly word, and was meant to be. While as for the sins of omission, it is no new knowledge that they are frequently as bad as those of commission, even more so, since they are likely to embrace the further sin of hypocrisy. Not a few wise and virtuous people regard the latest rulings of those in charge of motion picture morals as a decalogue of indecency and evasion. To say, for instance, that adultery cannot be shown upon the screen cuts a huge slice out of life and means that no one, where the screen is concerned, will ever learn any common sense or decency about adultery. Apparently only censors, Baptist deacons, and Methodist bishops are un-

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aware that lubricity is almost entirely a matter of suggestion. But the motion pictures are aware of it. A deminude lady, rampant in a showerbath, might very well be taken as the crest of their coat of arms.

Once again, one does not object except that this sort of thing kills life, and life, of which sex is a very large part, is interesting if properly approached. At all events, it is the only material with which the writer, playwright, or scenarist has to deal, and if he completes the vicious circle I have indicated, he must certainly arrive at the spot where he kills the goose that lays the golden eggs.

As usual in a dilemma one finds an eagerness to blame some one else. Thus Mr. Will Hays:

“Only in so far as the general level of public taste rises to higher standards will it be possible for this industry or any other industry to bring the general level of its product up to standards cherished by the makers of the product.”

Poor old public! It is responsible for everything, and how irksome this must be for its leaders. But such being the case, why do they call themselves leaders? I once knew a small boy who at kindergarten, being unable to pry the head of a marching column away from another child, ran with tears to the extreme rear exclaiming that if he couldn’t be a leader he would be, instead, “a hind-er.” That child knew the principles of command and success. If you can’t at once lead, then, and with humbleness, you had best get behind and slowly shove your way to the front learning something on the way. Furthermore, beyond his sinister use of the words “industry” and “product,” Mr. Hays seems to me to be historically and even commercially incorrect. If our automobile manufacturers had waited for public taste to develop, we would still be riding in curious-looking cars; if our railroads had waited for public taste to develop, we would still be riding with what was known as “Pullman interior decoration.” The artist knows better, so does the successful business man, so does

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the successful manufacturer. You improve your product because you are interested in it and have toward it an intelligent point of view, and your public improves with your product.

As far as the motion pictures are concerned, I see no answer. They have been peculiarly subject to unsolicited advice, and they have been peculiarly obstinate in rejecting it, bad or good. If you persist in believing that sex almost entirely consists in women partially taking off their clothes; if you insist in believing that men—your heroes—do not function except sexually, but then only in some very simple form, you eventually reach a point of saturation and induration, the nemesis of which is a complete and unprofitable anæsthesia.

Chapter Nine

MODERN MUSIC

by PAUL ROSENFIELD

WE OF the advancing century form the audience of a radical, possibly durable change in the character of music. The recent works of European composers such as Strawinsky and Hindemith, DaFalla, Bartok and Prokofieff, and Americans such as Copland and Sessions, break with the tradition of music dominant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nor is it only with the works of such typical nineteenth and early twentieth century composers as Wagner and Liszt, Strauss and Debussy, that *Oedipus Rex* and the concertos and operas of Hindemith and DaFalla, and the orchestral and piano pieces of Sessions and Copland and Prokofieff are at variance. They contrast with those of Beethoven and Mozart no less sharply than with those of the composers of the decades immediately preceding the time of their births.

The operatic and concert music of the newer men is notable for its lack of graphic and dramatic elements. The stage works emulate the old music-operas; the concert pieces, absolute music. This tendency is anti-Beethoven-esque no less than anti-Wagnerian, Debussian, Straussian; since the habit of introducing descriptive and mimetic expressions into orchestral and theatrical works, culminant

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in the tone-poems of Strauss, and Rimsky-Korsakoff, the operas of Wagner and Debussy, and the ballets of the early Strawinsky, took immediate inception from the 3rd *Leonore Overture* and the *Pastoral Symphony*, and *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*. The newer men have likewise turned away from lyricism, the direct expression of personal emotions, and turned toward the epic form, projecting the centre of emotional gravity into the object itself; and personal lyricism seems to have been the dominant motive of Beethoven's chamber music: the lyricism of Schumann and Brahms and Tchaikowsky merely following after that of the noble singer of his own sorrows and delights. The new music has also little of the quality of vagueness, indefiniteness, mysteriousness; of those magical, veiled, far-reaching tones which seem to communicate distance and infinity. It is more positive, clear-cut, matter-of-fact; and need it be remarked that the mysterious accents and phrases which pervade the preludes of *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* with their peculiar magic, and still figure largely in compositions as recent as *Le Sacre du Printemps* by Strawinsky, and *Dreimal Sieben Lieder des Pierrot Luniare* by Schoenberg, and *Arcanes* by Varese, were anticipated by the finale of the *Jupiter Symphony*, and the Weber overtures? The new music is further distinguished by its conception in terms of the closed form: the fugue, the canon, the chorale, the figure variation, the *da capo* aria; and long before Wagner spoke of unending melodies, the steady development of motives, the unpredictable evolution of melodies, the infinite possibilities of their materials were objects of immense interest to the great classic symphonists. Finally, the recent compositions are noteworthy for their barrenness of a peculiar quality of loveliness, sensuous warmth, enticing tenderness. They tend toward the brusque, stern, severe; hence, they are devoid of the main characteristic of the music of the composers of

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The Marriage of Figaro and the *Sonata quasi una Fantasia*, merely extended and developed in Schumann, Debussy, and Schoenberg.

This last difference is most illuminating. It provides us with an invaluable clue to the origin of the whole radical change in the character of music recently revealed to us. The quality of loveliness, of sensuous warmth and enticing tenderness in music is fairly readily connected with a particular interest of life. There is little doubt that it communicates the feeling of Woman. One runs counter to too great a body of corroborative evidence in refusing to concede that the very composers whose music it suffuses were intensely subject to this feeling, and inspired by its object.

Two facts embolden us to identify the flower-likeness, delicacy, and sensuousness scarcely to be found in instrumental music before Mozart, certainly not before Rameau, and enduring into the expressions of our own day, with this feeling of woman. One of them, possibly a minor, but nevertheless valid justification, exists in the corroborative intuition of the common man. The man in the street has no intuitive capacity keener than the capacity for the detection of the presence of the amative, the erotic interest and its language. The musical public has consistently inferred the pervasion of the world of the characteristically nineteenth century musician with the figure and face of woman, the experience of love, the experience of life through love, the experience of the feminine principle in creation. It has consistently demanded books discussing the sexual relations of the composers who produced the particular tone and quality of which we speak: books identifying the *immortal beloved* of Beethoven; recounting the affair between Chopin and George Sand; explaining the situation of Liszt in reference to his Countess and his Princess. It has proved insatiable for editions of the correspondence of Mozart and his wife, of Wagner and Mathilda Wesendonck. It has longed for the letters exchanged by Brahms and Clara Schumann.

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And its interest in the amorous experiences of these people has been proportionate to its lack of interest in those of the composers of the preceding century. The musical public is aware that J. S. Bach had excellent reasons for declining the hand of Buxtehude's daughter at the price of the most coveted organ post in northern Germany. It knows that he lost his position in Mulhausen for giving *the stranger woman*, actually his affianced, singing lessons in church on Sunday afternoons. And no one is more than mildly interested in the facts. Nor has anyone the curiosity to inquire into the nature of Handel's intimate relationships. It is assumed he was a typical impresario of opera, and the assumption sets all curiosity at rest. The indifference regarding the sexual adventures of these great men flows from neither niceness nor sublimity, and entirely from the instinctive conviction of the public that, whatever they were, they were not the cardinal experiences of their lives, their main gateway to the world, the grand medium through which they felt the wonder of existence. With the same certainty with which it connects (now sentimentally, now vulgarly) an amount of the magic and warmth, the tenderness and directness of Mozart's music with an ardent, affectionate, tender nature's enchantment with feminine loveliness; an amount of the passion and idealism of Beethoven's sonatas with a grave and noble personality's longing for the consummation denied him by a ghastly sickness; an amount of the fever and morbidity of *Tristan* with the search of an imperious, insatiable temperament for an absolute and impossible devotion—with that same certainty, it knows that whatever the source of the inspiration of the sublime, rich, and massive structures of Bach and Handel actually was, it was in no preponderant degree the experience of sex, of woman and her life.

The second, perhaps more cogent, justification for our identification of the quality of loveliness in music with the specific and general feeling of woman is to be found in the

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corroborative testimony of the romantic composers themselves. We will pass over the dedications of Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una Fantasia* to Giulietta Guicciardi, of the sonata *Op. 14 No. 2* to Baroness von Braun, and Chopin's many gallant dedications, and the scene of Wagner's remittance of the score of *Tristan* into the hands of Mathilda Wesendonck. Significant as these associations appear, the motive of dedications is itself too complex a matter to permit one to attribute positive meanings to them. But there is an association of romantic music positively significant of a connection with the idea of woman. This is its large conjugation with literary forms and texts expressive of feelings of sexual love, of intimate personal affection, or desire, or passion of various temperatures and complexions; and the language's power of specific reference admits no doubt of the relation. While the music less suffused by the quality of sensuous loveliness than romantic music is, is also found joined to erotic literary subjects, its greatest examples are combined with spiritual or non-erotic texts: the music Handel wrote for *Rinaldo* is not to be compared with that of *Israel in Egypt*; and Rameau's masterpiece is not *Hippolyte et Aricie* but the almost sexless *Castor et Pollux*. Indeed, the typical amatory intrigue of the eighteenth century lyric theatre was either conventional or comic. The erotic subject was certainly not all-important. But one has only to scrutinize the roster of romantic operative subjects and orchestral programs to perceive how major the amount of sympathy the romanticists had for the subject of sexual love was; how subtle, grave, and free were their representations of it. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is distinguished from the *Don Juan* of Molière and the other older pictures of the volatile gentleman, by the sympathetic attitude of the composer toward his unregenerate subject. Mozart is anything but a partisan of the hypocritical Elvira and the cold and prudish Anna. The Don is his favorite. *The Marriage of Figaro* is distinguished for its marvellous musical depic-

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tion of the enchantment of the adolescent Cherubino, conscious for the first time of the climate of sex, and of the wounded love of the Countess. Beethoven's *Fidelio* is a moving celebration of conjugal love and faithfulness. The conflict of tragic passion is the triumphant subject of a majority of Wagner's music-dramas, from *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* to *Die Walküre* and *Tristan und Isolde*; and while its position is not absolutely central in *Siegfried* and *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*, it none the less figures as one of the main motives of the actions of these pieces. The musically most exquisite portions of Liszt's *Faust Symphony* are the second movement, associated with Marguerite, and the closing glorification of *das Ewig-Weibliche*. The most inspired passage of his *Dante Symphony* is connected with the phantoms of Paolo and Francesca. The *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz has as overt purpose a depiction of obsessive passion. Another of his symphonies was inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. His opera *Les Troyens à Carthage* represents the Dido episode of the *Aeneid*. The most poignant and musically rewarding of Tschaikowsky's tone-poems is a *Romeo and Juliet*; and one of the most popular is a *Francesca da Rimini*. His countryman Rimsky-Korsakoff has a *Tale of the Young Prince and the Young Princess* among the literary associations of *Scheherazade*, and while Rimsky's operatic masterwork, *Le coq d'or*, handles the erotic subject with wit and in a semi-burlesque spirit, for all their indirectness, both the wit and the burlesquerie clearly indicate the erotic centre of interest. The two most brilliant works of nineteenth century French opera are the *Faust* of Gounod, based on the amorous episode of the first part of Goethe's cosmic poem; and the *Carmen* of Bizet, that most fresh and most direct of all depictions of the primitive sexual encounter. In Italy, Verdi gave a version of *La Dame aux Camélias* (*La Traviata*). And his *Aïda* and *Otello* and *Falstaff* all represent love in tragic or wistful incarnations.

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The successful French opera-comique of the early twentieth century, Charpentier's *Louise*, gives the erotic romance of Paris a naturalistic setting. Even the leader of the French symphonic school, the cloistral César Franck, wrote a *Ruth* and a *Rebecca* for the operatic stage. Debussy's choice of literary subjects indicates an even greater occupation with the realm of woman. His first little masterpiece is a choral setting of Rossetti's curiously half-spiritual, half-sensual *The Blessed Damozel*. It was followed by the *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, that evocation of the sensuous, pagan, arcadian world of the nymphs and their lovers. Debussy's principal stage-work, the unique *Pelléas et Mélisande*, has for its subject a tragic love like that of Tristan and Isolde. Among his *Images for Orchestra* we find a *Sirènes*; among his piano pieces a *Danseuses de Delphes* and an *Ondine*. His contemporary Dukas obliged with the ballet *La Péri*, a representation of the Oriental legend of Alexander the Great and the fay. *La Legende de Salomé* of Schmitt is an interesting expression of the irresponsibility and destructive power of woman.—The Franco-American, Loeffler, has a symphonic poem on the subject of Virgil's love-sick sorceress.—While both the *Don Juan* and the *Don Quixote* of Strauss approach the erotic experience in the spirit of a disappointed idealism, they none the less affirm a preoccupation with the prickly subject. It returns in *Ein Heldenleben* and *Sinfonia Domestica* with frankly personal references. In *Salomé* it becomes an interest in sadism; in *Der Rosenkavalier* it returns in the costume of eighteenth century lightness, buffoonery; and it remains the principal figure in the actions of *Ariana auf Naxos*, *Joseph's Legende*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Die Aegyptische Helena*.—The most moving passages of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* are associated with a despairing summons to love. Reger's cantata *Die Nonnen* mixes the language of profane with that of sacred love.—The subject of Ravel's most ambitious composition, is the deco-

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rative amour of Daphnis and Chloe; and he, too, has an *Ondine* among his *Miroirs* for piano.—The erotic subject even figures in the early work of the very men who later led the neo-classic revolution. One is naturally little surprised to find it in Schoenberg's texts, since Schoenberg remains the faithful scion of the great romantic line. But if he has a *Gurrelieder*, on romantic love-texts by Jens Peter Jacobsen, a *Verklärte Nacht* after Dehmel's sequence of dramatic love-poems, and if his two stage works, *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* embody tragic experiences of sex, his rival and opponent Strawinsky no less composed *Le Sacre du Printemps*, a ballet inspired by erotic pagan rites, and *Les Noces*, a rustic wedding feast; and both Strawinsky's ballets *Petrushka* and *L'histoire du soldat* include erotic motives. Finally, Milhaud wrote *L'homme et son désir*, and Copland set Pound's *An Immorality* for women's chorus, and Hindemith has a *Marienleben*.

Lack of present space forbids our examining in detail the testimony borne by romantic song-texts of the persistence of the amatory motif among romantic composers. The mere statement that it corroborates the testimony of their operatic and symphonic literature must suffice. But we cannot help noticing the further sanction for the identification of the quality of sensuous loveliness with the feeling of woman, given by the circumstance that the decrease of that quality in neo-classic music has actually been accompanied by a subordination of what is popularly known as the love interest in the dramatic and literary texts used by the composers. One of the characteristics of the newer music is its frequent combination with sacred texts. Strawinsky in his *Psalms*, Webern in his *Spiritual Songs*, Szymanowski in his *Stabat Mater*, Lurie in his *Mass*, mark the resurgence of a sacred as distinguished from a profane music. In *Die Meistersinger*, young Walther, asked whether he chooses a sacred subject for his trial-piece, replies *Was heilig mir, der Liebe Panier, sing Ich und*

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schwing Ich: but love is no longer holy for the newer men. Even the texts of composers who do not write churchly music, Hindemith for instance, exhibit a similar disaffection for the erotic subject. His most ambitious stage-work, the opera *Cardillac*, places a murderous greed at the centre of interest. Prokofieff has an *industrial* ballet; a clown ballet; a cantata on *The Ugly Duckling* of Hans Christian Andersen. The list bears of a very great extension.

But if the feeling of woman is a distinguishing motive of all romantic music—the sense of her power, her being: the experience of her life and love—that sense is not the feeling of *women*, much as certain romantic compositions, the Walpurgisnacht's music in Gounod's *Faust* for example, might influence us to suppose it to be! We must not fall into the vulgar error of believing that this pervasive romantic feeling has a *sexual* motif, that its object is identical with that of the specifically sexual energy; and that the art to which it contributes is either the result of a deflection of the energy naturally directed toward sexual relations, or an indirect strategy of that libido. We must indeed refuse to permit a certain school of psychologists to convince us that if the sexual experience was so grandiosely motive in the art of the romantic musicians, it was active for the reason that the outlets of flesh and blood was closed to them; or to persuade us that the power of art over women offered a number of reluctant or excessively amorous swains an instrument for the indirect communications of their desires and a strategy for dominating the difficult object. That some of the romantic composers were men either deprived of, or deficiently blessed with, direct sexual consummations is not to be denied. Beethoven appears never fully to have possessed any of the women he loved. Wagner found peace, with Cosima von Bülow, only in the latter part of his life. The relations of Chopin and George Sand were episodic. The nature of those of Brahms and Clara Schumann remains a mystery. Nevertheless, the evidence of sex-

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ual frustrations in the lives of these men does not give us an adequate basis for assuming that the tension resulting from these frustrations was their motive of composition: intense as their occupation with the amorous experience actually was. The tension flowing from sexual frustrations reigns in too many persons artistically unproductive to be isolated as the cause of work such as Beethoven's, or Wagner's, or Chopin's. Of course, it will be said that these unproductive persons were deficient in talent: that, had they talent, they could have expressed themselves through art. But talent has been defined as a capacity for taking pains, a capacity for disinterestedness, remoteness, abstraction. As such, it is not a commodity absolutely granted one individual and refused another; and the pretension, that if one man sings and another is silent it is merely because the one is talented and the other giftless, falls to the ground.— Besides, many of the composers who infused the peculiar quality of loveliness into their music, Mozart and Schumann pre-eminently, were happy lovers. And while their happiness may have intensified both their capacities for, and their need of, the full and various interchanges of love with the breathing objects of their affections, and may even have created a fund of energy which had to find outlets other than that of direct sexual exchange, their lives again prove that the energy directed to romantic music-making was not the deflection of an energy naturally directed from man to woman, to alien ends.

Neither must we assume, as Tolstoy in *The Kreutzer Sonata* provoked us to do, that the motive of romantic music-making was the search for an indirect outlet on the part of an excessive amativity, fatally bound to communicate its motive and create a state favorable to erotic consummations. That the greater number of the romanticists were lovers, that they had an inordinate need of love, that they were specially sensitive to women, and that their relations with the sex were the sources of joys and sorrows, must be

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acknowledged. And it is a fact that the desire to communicate a state, to win either an object or the world itself to sympathy with it, figures among the incentives of the work of art. Yet it is by no means the main incentive; and to see it as such is to overlook the basic impulse of art in the artist. That motive rises in an undifferentiated region of vital energies directed toward no specific object or objects, and toward things as a whole. Like the saint, the scientist, and perhaps the sportsman, the artist is one who posits in the external universe a unity related to, and perhaps the image of, the unity at the base of his own energies. He feels it as the spirit of things themselves; and his interest is sympathetically directed toward the everchanging state and movement and tempo of this mysterious substance: the absolute, the basic forces of the universe, the thing in itself, the ideas, or God, or whatever the name under which it is conceived. Like the Michelangelo of Emerson, "himself from God he cannot free". And his constant desire is to approach, to unveil, to penetrate and comprehend this unknown, invisible, incommensurable, and eternally attractive principle. In turn it reveals itself to him through material, in the guise of beauty. It reaches him as a *touch* of some sort; through the eye, if he is a painter, through the ear, if he is a musician, through both, if he is a poet.

It will be asked: Why then, the *feeling of woman* on the part of the romanticist, the concentration on the experience of sex? The answer is, that for certain people, and at certain times for almost all people, the cosmic force exhibits characteristics which, because of their relation to woman, perhaps their quality of abundance, progenitiveness, indefiniteness, we call feminine; making the qualities of woman herself their symbol. We must not forget that, if, in the West, and for Judaism and Mohammedanism and Protestantism, the principle of the universe is predominantly masculine, and conceived as a lord of battles, a judge, and a father; in the East, it is feminine: Kali, the mother. And

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Europe has had its recurrent recognitions of a feminine nature in the cosmocreator, the unknown form-giver of life. It is certain that primitive Christianity conceived the Holy Ghost as feminine. The fact that its symbol, the dove, was known throughout pagany as the symbol of Venus, is significant. Catholicism has always tended to associate the Virgin with the Trinity; and the doctrine of the immaculate conception merely authorized the association. Under the influence of the recognition of this feminine principle in the universe, especially in the periods that have recognized it with exaltation and with joy, there has arisen a special type of art, called romantic from the romance peoples who, at the close of the crusades, enthroned the Virgin with triumphant worship, and brought forth an art, a literature, and a music filled with praise of Her, of love, of woman; permeated with the qualities of all feminine things. There was an earlier romantic literature, coincident with the establishment at Rome by Hadrian of the worship of Venus Genetrix, and exemplified by the *Pervigilium Veneris*, and the romantic fiction of Apuleius. Still, it was the age of the great cathedrals, the age of the troubadour poetry which culminated in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, that saw its special flowering in the West; this age, and again the baroque period; and last, the *romantic* period of the nineteenth century. This latter period knew the feminine principle under barbarous philosophical and scientific names. But if it spoke of a dark mysterious will to live and an incalculable *élan vitale*, it was none the less conscious of what the ancients knew as the astral Venus, and the mediæval peoples as the Virgin. And its chief poet at least had the grace to call it *das Ewig-Weibliche*.

It is quite plausible that the discovery and appreciation of this feminine principle in things may have been the consequence of an epochal and challenging development in the psyche of women themselves. Henry Adams has pointed out the ascending influence exercised by women

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on the life of the period which produced the troubadour poetry, and the cathedrals crowned by the joyous shrine at Chartres. And long before Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House*, the nineteenth century was called "the century of the woman." It remains an interesting fact that, in the two main glories of strictly romantic poetry, *The Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust*, a growing woman, or rather more, her love, becomes the revealer of the eternal order of things. The exquisite little girl whom Dante in his childhood loved becomes the celestial creature "known to every drop of his blood," who leads him through the empyrean. The aspiring young girl whom Goethe knew at sixteen, and whom his father and the authorities so brutally maltreated, becomes the heavenly penitent drawing Faust onward into continuously higher regions of experience. But it is equally significant that both Beatrice and Gretchen merely lead their lovers toward their eternal archetypes, the mystic rose and *das Ewig-Weibliche*.

It is even possible that her discovery flows from a periodical increase of feminine elements in the unconscious of men themselves, rendering them unusually sensitive to woman. There is no doubt that in its extreme manifestations, romanticism, the consciousness of the feminine principle of creation is sympathetic to masochism: a glorification of the feminine elements at the expense of the masculine; precisely as classicism in its extreme forms is sympathetic to homosexuality, the glorification of the masculine at the expense of the feminine. The company of the minnesingers contained at least one demented creature who travelled about the country dressed as *Frau Venus*, and the prevalence of tenor tones in modern romantic music—in Schumann in particular—cannot be overlooked. Yet it must be observed that it is never an exclusively feminine principle that is known to even the typical romantic poet and musician. A masculine principle is always to some degree coincident with this feminine one, and re-

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vealed along with her. This masculine principle is felt as the beauty of severity and strength and awfulness: it is the spirit of classic art, probably so called after the Greeks and republican Romans who communicated it to Europe; precisely as its partner and opponent is always the spirit of romance. The first would seem to be the spirit of the rational, the fixed, and the finite: the fountain of logic, law, and order, and all that binds men in herds and subordinates their desires to a common good; the source of social loyalties. The second would seem to be more the spirit of nature, of the irrational, the indefinite, the infinite: the spirit of the passions, the individual, and all the other objects of romantic affirmation; the breath of everything opposed or incommensurable or indifferent to authority, to the human herd and its laws. The spirit of romance is the spirit of revolt, of the individual conscience, of the people, of rebellion against convention. It is significant how great a number of the romantic operas—*Tristan* and *Pelléas* and *Die Walküre* are dramas of adultery; conceived not in the spirit of cynicism which classicism brings to the subject, but of seriousness, of fervour, and of idealism.

Besides, all major works of art incorporate and harmonize the two contrasting principles, quite as the Periclean Athenians incorporated both the severe and simple Dorian and the lithe, ornate Ionic columns in their Acropolis. It is very possible that the dialectical themes of the Beethoven symphony, too, the dramatic theme and the lyric theme, are the protagonists of these contrasting cosmic forces.—It is merely that at certain historical periods, one or the other force appears more dominant; making periods either more classical or more romantic; and the respective dominations would seem to alternate with a certain regularity, very much like those of Mars and Venus in Lucretius' naturalistic poem. The alternation of architectural styles, for example, clearly exhibits this rhythm.

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Foliated Gothic art, in Huysman's phrase "the art of the Virgin and her Child," was preceded by that direct development of the masculine classic architecture of antiquity, the Romanesque, "the art of God the Father." It was followed by a return to classicism in the Renaissance. Renaissance classicism in turn was succeeded by the feminine capricious baroque; and that made way for the neo-classicism of the age of Louis XV; and that in turn was followed by the romantic Gothicizing architecture of the mid-nineteenth century.

Thus, we at last recognize the source of this feeling of woman characterizing the substance of romantic, of what until very recently was modern, music. Perhaps it were even better called the feeling *through* woman, for the reason that the specifically sexual experience, the wondrous sense of the woman of flesh and blood, her life and being, seems merely the gateway to the experience of her cosmic archetype. It is the variety of this actually religious experience, flowing from the particular temperaments and dispositions of the musicians themselves, that creates the variety of the particular messages, or contents, of their works. Mozart, Catholic and Austrian, appears to have known Her as a tender, warm, and smiling divinity; generous of consummations. The pulse of his music affirms the sweetness in the skies. Desire and fulfilment for him apparently awaited each other, as if with arms outstretched. If life was yearning, it was but the gentle yearning the Olympians themselves might feel upon their deathless roses. If there was tension, it was soon resolved, and perfections blossomed. In the heart of things, he seems ever to have known the grace of the gestures of the children of Zeus, and movements like the slow noble motions of beautiful arms, and breaths taken in calm and beauty; a pulse divinely light, a dance of the young Graces.—In Beethoven, the robuster German, She appears, like the Leonore of his opera, a spirit moving the heart to virtue

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and trust in human nature and ideal aspiration. It was as a magnet of transcendent purity that he must have felt her: the thrilling of the flutes in the Credo of the *Missa Solemnis* celebrate the miracle of incarnate innocence, goodness, and love. We feel she sent him on his search through nature for her responsive embodiment. Even in the final quartets, where hope of actual possession no longer figures, her presence in the human heart seems sufficient. The song is still rapturous with the mystery of the incarnate spark of purity.—For Chopin, half Polish and half French, She appears to have been a creature of an infinite grace, luxuriousness, capriciousness, incentive to patrician manners and delicacy and pride, and filling the veins with unquenchable thirsts for sensuous delight. She spoke in the suavity of bodily lines, the satiny quality of textures. In her, there was the source both of intoxications and of icy torments.—For Wagner, the Saxon and the pessimist, She was almost identical with the biological urge of nature in its most ruthless and inexorable form: but a biological urge impulsive to now tragical, now triumphant, but always heroically ample and splendid states and actions. In *Tannhäuser* she appears, in the form of the demoniacal Venus, as the source of the almost delusional hunger and search for impossible transports, separating the individual from humanity, and generating tragedy. In *Tristan* she turns flesh and blood and sense into towering, skyward flame, resolving all things into terms of urge and rhythm and fluidity like the sea's, the stream's, the brand's, filling life with a desire for unconscious participation in the All realizable only in death. In *Die Walküre* she is the spirit of individual revolt, of heroic opposition to the will of the herd; in *Siegfried*, the spirit of youth and courage which shatters the power of the past, and sends the young anarchist through the flames to waken the new woman. In *Die Meistersinger* she is the idealistic spirit of a race, moving it to freshness, power, and sympathy with

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life. And in *Parsifal* she is both the source of the infinite woe of existence, and the source of that compassion which heals the suffering and brings salvation.

What was She to Brahms? A deal of his music, particularly certain songs, and pages such as the slow movement of the B-flat pianoforte concerto, seems to sing the benign queen in her. The mood is a profound rapture. This intoxicated note is none the less not the characteristic one of Brahms; the stoic note of steadfastness, of endurance and courage is more specifically his. We gather that she was his inspiration to the power to persist in a never-quite-rewarded search, to endure a life full of vexation and pain; that, and the gate to green and flowing nature, to peaceful moods, and the state of rest from struggle.—Again, for all the variations from the older romantic æsthetics discernible in the very late-romanticists like Rimsky and Strauss and Debussy; for all Rimsky's objective and detached and witty relationship with his material, and Strauss's eclecticism, and Debussy's return to eighteenth century reserve and understatement, She is still the prime motive. For the Rimsky of *Le coq d'or*, the seduction of the Queen of Samarcand and the voice of the golden cockerel are engines of the ineluctable will of things, calling men from their fastnesses into the foggy unillumined realms of chance, where miracles and disasters cloudily await them. For the earlier Strauss, She seems to have been the special source of romantic irony, that perverse spirit which turns things into their contraries with an inevitable regularity—infatuation into disgust (*Don Juan*), idealization into disillusionment (*Don Quixote*), concordance into opposition (*Sinfonia Domestica*), passion into sadism (*Salomé*), childlike love into demoniac hate (*Elektra*). With *Der Rosenkavalier*, the feeling becomes joyous, light, and *buffo*; but the implications are cynical. For the later Strauss, She has become the source of some mockery in things, unsympathetic for all her showers of pleasure. The

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mood is averse, deprecative, dismissing the source of love and ardour as something mechanical, not at all adorable, the source of events and experiences of the quality of frosted cakes and pretty tinsel.—For Debussy of *Pelléas*, however, She remained divine, organ though she was of the very silence of things, their fathomlessness, their incommunicability. Like the Mélisande of his lyric drama, she is a tragic mystery. Whether she speaks *yes* or *no*, whether she lives or dies, she is an unknown, never fully to be grasped; a magnet that leads men to ecstasy and despair, life and death, but whose purposes and feelings and nature remain hidden and apart. For the later Debussy of the *Images for Orchestra and Piano*, she was the organ of a kind of euphoria, an enchantment of the moment, lifting it from the endless and dreamlike and unsubstantial flux with a gleam of rose and gold; imparting a sudden intoxication to the senses, and then disappearing; like the frolic of the waves, the shimmer of light on vegetation, the gush of fireworks, into the darkness and monotony of things.

The ultra-moderns in their earliest days knew Her in cognate forms. The Strawinsky of the *Sacre* knew her as the biological urge in its most inexorable form, bare of the aspiration of *Tristan*, forcing the animal to sacrifice his individual life for the benefit of the herd, playing him as electrical force plays the wheels and levers of a machine. A similar but more refined conception informs *Les Noces*; the wedding feast leads up to the mystical separation of the bridal couple from the community in obedience to the urge blindly impelling two people out of their old separate selves into a new life. The erotic music of another contemporary, Ernest Bloch, suggests an intuition of the feminine principle kin to that of the Strawinsky of the *Sacre*. Together with their sensuality, Bloch's *Violin Sonata* and *Piano Quintet* have warmth and passion, and an aspiration comparable to Wagner's. But some sullenness of colour, some melancholy, suggests that for him

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as for the early Strawinsky, the woman in the universe is an imperious, material, essentially loveless thing.—As for Schoenberg, in him we find traces of the old romantic ideal magnetism, mixed with a curious ascetic strain. His early, delicate, almost effeminate sextet, *Verklärte Nacht*, feels her as the source of peace, of harmony with the All. Some of the songs and erotically-coloured sections of *Dreimal Sieben Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire* show the old romantic exaltation, a little more subtle and a little more ghostly than it was in Wagner. "Eine weisse Wächerin." But in the monodrama *Erwartung*, love is the force which lures the woman out from behind her garden walls to disappointment, to the discovery of a lover slain for the love of another woman; and to the mystical sublimation of the discovery of a "lover in the skies." And in the little music-drama *Die Glückliche Hand*, love is an half-demonic thing which lures man to delusional rapture, to a tragic wakening and despair and collapse, and to a reception of the voices of resignation and relinquishment.

But in the very latest music, neither love nor the "feeling through woman" predominates, neither in the literary subject nor in the quality of the music itself; and we are now prepared to understand the change. In any case, we are prepared not to attribute it to any new disharmony between men and women. A certain kind of critic is very much given to finding a growing "impotence" among men, due to the use of the machine and the direct participation of women in the affairs of the world. The reasoning is shallow. Men have used machines ever since *pithecanthropus erectus* lifted a stick to strike an apple off a tree. Women participated in affairs even before the tribes of the Germans instated them in their councils. The present co-operation of women in business and the professions has not tended to minimize the difference between the sexes; or robbed the sexual relations of those tensions and rewards which nature bestows upon the relations of all firmly

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entrenched opposites. If anything, their co-operation has tended to create harmony between the two sexes, mutual comprehension and toleration: greater than that which existed in the times nervously bent upon accentuating sexual differences and oppositions. The girl who works in an office or factory works there as a woman; and the man who works alongside her is the recipient of those qualities of life which women impart to everything that interests them. While the economic independence of women has challenged the male, and deprived him of a certain power he once had, it has also placed his sexual relationships on the plane of things which stand and fall on their own merits; assuring him of expressions existing for their own sake, and not for economic reasons or the benefit of the family.

No: if the ultra-modern music-makers have less to say about sexual relationships than their predecessors, it is likely that the cause lies in the periodic predominance of the masculine principle in things, and the new direction of the sympathy of the whole of humanity away from his partner. We have noticed the connection between classic art and the feeling of things through this masculine principle; and the ultra-modern music shows that predilection for the severe rather more than for the lovely style, that predilection for the closed and finite form rather more than for the open and infinite, that preference for the epic manner over the more lyrical, which has ever characterized classic periods. The sexual motive still figures in their work. But it figures as a minor interest: and the sexual satire of DaFalla's *El Retablo de Massa Pedro* and Hindemith's *Neues vom Tage* is but an expression of humanity's adjustment to a new situation which has made necessary the deflation of a certain romantic ardour and rapture. The more social relations seem salient, now: the relations of man as an whole to the universe: the relations of man to man in the state; the collective experience: as in the days of *Israel in Egypt* and *The Passion As Music*. A motive of

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this sort is plainly discernible in the *Oedipus Rex* of Stravinsky. The incest between Oedipus and Jocasta, precipitous of the catastrophe as it is, is not the prime interest of this opera-oratorio. The motive is the divorce between conscious and unconscious man, between the "head" and the "members"; and the catastrophe but symbolizes the death of man's sense of self-importance and separation from the rest of creation. The social motive figures also in Stravinsky's ballet *Apollon Musagetes*. The male principle, Apollo, leads forth the muses; directs them in the austere formal measures of the classic dance; and finally marshals them in an order which suggests the well-functioning machine or society.

None the less, it is still too early positively to diagnose a return of the masculine spirit dominant in all classic periods. The new music is still too small a body of work to be absolutely significant; and a certain self-consciousness, a deliberateness of process, an imitation of older forms, give the movement a certain pseudo-classical aspect. Still, much that begins deliberately, and as imitation, grows in time into a kind of second nature. Whether the new movement is a genuine classical return, is one of the questions to which the future possesses the answer. Whatever the answer, it will be bound to be one of those most significant of the actual course of things, the "changes in the skies" decisive for our own time.

Chapter Ten

MAN, WOMAN, AND THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

by ROBERT BRIFFAULT

THE riddle of sexual mental differences arises chiefly from the insuperable difficulties in the way of drawing with any certainty a distinction between the accumulated effects of social factors and the biological correlatives of sex. That there exists a real correlation between the mental characters of the sexes, apart from the effects of differential social upbringing, conventional avocations, and other cultural influences must be regarded as beyond question. Sex differences are manifested in every tissue, every organ, every cell of the body. Organic reactions necessarily participate in that differentiation as do physical characters. A woman's handwriting is usually distinguishable even by the inexpert from a man's. A woman's written thought presents no less definite sexual characteristics. It is only natural to presume that mental sexual differences are exhibited in the highest degree in the affective and emotive spheres, since on any psychological view that aspect determines all others, constitutes the basis of the psychic mechanism, and is most directly connected with the biological and physiological basis of that mechanism. It is, therefore, to be expected that the respective reactions of men and women in regard to artistic feeling and expression should display in the

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most pronounced manner sexual differences in mental characters. That antecedent probability proves to be entirely justified. The respective achievements of men and women in art, while they illustrate the difficulties of distinguishing between cultural and innate characters, at the same time indicate, more clearly perhaps than any other field of inquiry, the direction of the solution.

The charge that women's achievements in artistic production have been inconsiderable may, like other similar charges, be met by the retort that this is the natural result of agelong conditions which have debarred women from exercising and developing their artistic powers, and that the quality and quantity of their artistic output and of their æsthetic culture is, therefore, no criterion of natural sexual differences in that respect. The argument applies to a large proportion of mental sexual differences. In this instance, however, it does not accord fully with the facts of cultural history. These show that women were in all probability the inventors, and have for ages been the chief, if not the only practitioners of decorative arts, and that, although they have during long periods lost the monopoly, they have never entirely discontinued the pursuit of those arts in some form. The argument from the long disuse of artistic powers does not, therefore, rightly apply in this particular instance. At the same time creative pictorial art does not appear, even when no cultural disqualifications have limited women's participation in it, to have been extensively practised by them.

A brief survey of the facts will make this clear.

The Greek geographer Strabo tells us that among the ancient Gauls "as among other barbarians, the respective occupations of the men and the women are distributed in the reverse manner from that which is customary among ourselves." The statement, which is one of many similar reports having reference to various peoples, represents the impression created by the sexual distribution of occupation

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in phases of culture below the level of historical civilization. The men, in those social phases, are engaged for the most part in warlike pursuits or in hunting, and are accordingly debarred from taking an important part in other avocations. The practical arts of life are thus mostly in the hands of the women. Owing to those circumstances, nearly all industrial processes of manufacture, as well as commerce, agriculture, etc., are feminine occupations. That distribution of labour between the sexes is all the more pronounced as we recede towards simpler and more primitive cultural conditions. The primitive hunter's task of providing animal food and protecting the community does not permit his engaging in handicrafts and processes of manufacture. Most practical arts and handicrafts have thus originated as feminine devices and occupations. These include leather-work, which comprises a large variety of processes and applications, from the fashioning of garments and shoes to the manufacture of tents and canoes, basket-work, the many forms of textiles, the preparation of bark-cloth, pottery, which is throughout the uncivilized world an exclusively feminine occupation. Even housebuilding, from the rough huts of the lowest savage tribes, and the tents of nomads, to the substantial houses of the Pueblo Indians, is among the prescriptively feminine occupations of the simpler cultures. The sexual division of labour imposed by primitive cultural conditions is as a rule observed with almost superstitious scruple, so that for a man to engage in, or even to witness, the manufacture of pottery or the weaving of mats or cloth constitutes in many instances a breach of a tribal taboo.

The numerous products of primitive feminine handicrafts are usually marked by considerable artistic taste, and even in comparatively lowly stages of culture every opportunity is used by craftswomen to add to the appearance of their productions by ornamentation. Women have thus been not only the primitive manufacturers, but also

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the earliest practitioners of decorative and applied art. The pottery produced by primitive women is almost invariably ornamented with conventional patterns, sometimes polychromatic, which are in many instances highly elaborate. The basketry of some American tribes, such as the Maidu, is famous for the intricate beauty and variety of its designs. Among many Brazilian and African tribes the posts of huts and houses are ornamented by the women with painted decorations. Polynesian mats of native flax, the gorgeous Hawaiian feather-work, are other instances of the skill and taste of uncultured woman for decorative handicraft. Those aptitudes are manifested in the simplest phases of primitive handicraft, such as the preparation of garments from hides stitched together with tendon-thread by means of bone needles. The polychromatic robes thus produced by women of the Amerind and Eskimo races present elaborate patterns formed by the insertion of various furs. They are frequently embroidered and adorned with fringes manufactured from tendon dyed in rich colours by means of vegetable juices. Aleutian women will sometimes devote a whole year to the production of such embroidered fur robes. The same processes and the same technique are found on the Asiatic side on the Amur basin and in Kamchatka. But in the latter region and in Central Asia the gradual substitution of silk, satin, and wool for the primitive hide and tendon has gradually taken place, the patterns and the technique remaining substantially unaltered. A study of the processes employed shows that this substitution has taken place in all the central Asiatic populations where needlework and embroidery are still the staple handicrafts of the women. The decorative and technical tradition can thus be traced continuously from the most primitive phases of culture to the elaborate products of Oriental needlework for which the women of Tyre were renowned in antiquity and which is still the chief feminine handicraft that the harems of the East supply to the mar-

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kets of the world. A similar continuity of artistic tradition connects the products of feminine handicraft in barbaric Europe with the tapestry needlework which was one of the chief artistic expressions of women during the Middle Ages, and continued to be prominent until late Victorian times and, in a more restricted sense, to the present day.

From those cultural historical considerations it follows that the expression of feminine æsthetic impulses in decorative applied art is not a result of agelong cultural conditions, but has been characteristic of woman's artistic activities from the very beginning. In no period has it been completely in abeyance. It has persisted throughout profound changes in the social position of woman, and was as pronounced in early phases where, as among the eastern Amerind tribes, the Eskimo, the Kamtchadals, that position involved a high degree of independence as in social periods which imposed great cultural restrictions on women.

On the other hand, feminine decorative art does not appear at any stage, even the most ancient and primitive, or in any society marked by feminine dominance, such as ancient Egypt, to have been associated with, or to have led to pictorial art and the representation of animal or human forms. Such forms may be said to be entirely absent in the products of feminine applied art which can be traced to the remotest beginnings of prehistoric culture. In those phases, as in all others, pictorial, imaginative and representative artistic production appears to have been as characteristically masculine as decorative ornamental handicraft has been characteristically feminine.

Pictorial art of a very high quality can, as is well known, be traced back to the Old Stone Age in Europe, both in the forms of carvings of animal and human forms and in the cave paintings which abound in northern Spain and the south of France. It would, of course, not be possible to demonstrate positively that those artistic products have

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been the work of men and not of women, but circumstantial and comparative evidence leaves no real doubt as to that conclusion. The themes of paleolithic and of neolithic art are for the most part connected with hunting. They are, therefore, presumably the work of hunters, and are indeed almost certainly connected with magico-religious rites intended to promote the success of the chase. Their close similarity to Bushman art has been noted, and that primitive pictorial art is the product of male artists. Again, the same differentiation between feminine and masculine artistic production may be observed in other living races of low culture. In New Zealand, for example, the women excel in the production of highly artistic decorative handicraft, such as mats, but pictorial representations of animals and of the human figure are the work of the men.

One of the characteristics of prehistoric European pictorial art is the abundance of remarkably realistic representations of the female form. The steatopygous statuettes of southern France, Crete, the Danube basin, and neolithic Egypt are instances in point. Representations of men, on the other hand, are extremely rare, and in many instances entirely absent. The fact is probably not wholly unconnected with the circumstance that the sexual interest of men in the female form is psychologically very much greater than the interest of women in the masculine body.

The above facts point to the conclusion that the specialization of the feminine artistic impulse in decorative and ornamental art and its markedly lesser achievement in pictorial representative art, is related to biological and psychological sexual characters, and is not a result of social and cultural conditions.

That conclusion harmonizes with other indications of sexual psychology and may serve to confirm the conception of mental differences, apart from cultural social influences, to which they seem to point. To put it crudely, the feminine mind appears to be in general less influenced by imagina-

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tion than is the typically masculine mind. To that lesser disposition towards imaginative flight and representative conceptual thought may be ascribed the realism of the feminine mind, its indisposition to abstraction, and its consequent apparent limitations in the field of speculation, of theoretical thought, of mental synthesis and exploration. Such intellectual characters may be connected with the apparent deficiency of women in artistic creative achievement. The æsthetic side of feminine mentality may, by virtue of the same tendency, be regarded as more directly concerned with present sensation, with its pleasantness or unpleasantness, rather than with its suggestiveness as a stimulus to the imagination. Women appear to be more generally sensitive to beauty than men, and in a marked degree more sensitive to the lesion inflicted by unsightliness. Men, on the other hand, are more interested in the suggestiveness and significance of artistic presentation than in its actual agreeable quality. Form for its own sake and, above all, colour for its own sake are more intrinsically important and interesting to women than to men. The interest of women in flowers, which appears to be general and spontaneous, would seem to be part of their particular appreciation of colour.

If I am right in my interpretation of cultural history, those sexual psychological differences are more deeply founded than the acquired effects of social and cultural conditions, and are true sexual differences. They may, it is true, be regarded as having been at least accentuated by the rigid primitive division of sexual labour imposed by social conditions, and which have no parallel in sub-human life. The continuity of human association implies the relative sedentariness of woman and her attachment to the home, while, in primitive stages, the avocation of the hunter and warrior has similarly tended to develop the erratic and adventurous wandering proclivities of the male. Hence his mind has tended to develop in the direction of imaginative

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expectations, exploration, and the forestalling of experience. The rites of primitive magic consist indeed largely in such an imaginative forestalling of the wished-for experience, and it is that disposition which is large illustrated by the pictorial art of primitive man. The woman is, on the contrary, more immediately concerned with rendering the present and actual environment agreeable, with embellishing and ornamenting it, with excluding the unpleasant and the ugly.

The differences manifested in the artistic interests and activities of men and women respectively may thus be regarded as imposed by social factors. But social factors which have operated in all human society from the first stand in a somewhat different class from those which have operated only during given periods as the result of social conventions. Those socially acquired characters which have been inseparable from the social situation from the beginning must be regarded as having acquired the force of natural biological characters, and cannot be blotted out by any change in social arrangements or conventions. They are established not only in conventional social tradition, but also in the psychic and physiological make-up of the sexes and are, therefore, indistinguishable from natural characters.

Psychological and physiological tests, while they are in many respects inconclusive, tend to confirm the conclusions drawn from cultural history. Generally speaking, the keenness of the senses appears to be more highly developed in women than in men. Sensory skin discrimination is greater in females than in males. All the tests show a pronounced superiority in the discrimination of shades of colour in women. A considerable number of investigators, chiefly German, have conducted comparative tests on spontaneous drawing abilities of girls and boys. The results of those tests are uniform and significant. Girls show in every instance a greater disposition to fine decorative details; boys are superior in inventiveness, in humour, and in rep-

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resenting motion. In exercises consisting of filling up surfaces with decorations, the girls invariably excelled or manifested a better sense of proportion. The drawings of girls are in general smaller and finer, those of boys larger and bolder in treatment. Girls showed a better sense of colour, and preferred soft and neutral tints. In the choice of subjects flowers and houses predominated in the girls' drawings; ships, animals, and human forms in the boys'. Those results agree entirely, it will be seen, with the conclusions indicated by cultural history.

Those general sexual characters, subject, of course, like all similar generalizations, to qualifications and circumstantial exceptions, may serve to interpret broadly sexual differences in the manifestations of the artistic impulse in men and women respectively. Applied and decorative art has throughout cultural history been the particular sphere of woman; imaginative and creative art that of man.

The handicrafts which had their origin in primitive feminine household industry have passed into the hands of men as these became liberated from exclusive hunting and warlike pursuits by the settled agricultural conditions of early civilization. Pottery, for example, which is throughout the lower cultures entirely in the hands of women, has, as a general rule, become a masculine craft. The transition can be followed in some regions, such as Africa, where on the upper reaches of the Nile the manufacture of pottery is an exclusively feminine occupation; farther north, in Nubia, female potters work under the direction of a male manufacturer; while in Egypt the industry is a purely masculine one. In Cyrenaica, however, the art of pottery is still entirely a feminine handicraft, and its remarkable products are strangely identical in pattern and workmanship with the Egyptian ceramics of the twelfth dynasty, thus indicating that the latter were either the work of female potters or that the original pattern created by them had been faithfully adhered to. The persistence of orna-

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mental patterns is usually conspicuous in handicrafts which pass from the hands of women into those of male craftsmen and may be noted in mats, carpets, and other textiles no less than in ceramic art. In the latter, however, developments in ornamentation, such as the beautiful animal motives of Cretan pottery, mark the impress of masculine imagination.

With the passing of the bulk of handicraft production from feminine to masculine hands the influence of women's taste has operated rather by way of the demand than by way of the supply. That influence has, even so, been considerable. Woman throughout civilization has been the great patroness and consumer of luxury. The applied arts have in a large measure catered to her taste and been governed by her choice. From classical times down to the present day the textile arts, jewellery and articles of personal adornment, furniture, household decoration, and to some extent domestic architecture and gardening have been governed by a demand largely controlled by feminine taste. An enormous proportion of the industrial production upon which the economic wealth and the trade of capitalistic civilization are founded is ultimately engaged in supplying feminine luxury and is, therefore, indirectly governed by feminine taste. A change in that taste, a variation in fashion, in the details of feminine attire, in the mode of wearing the hair or in the length of skirts, will throw whole industries out of gear, alter the balance of trade, throw entire populations out of employment, close factories and bring new ones into existence.

The influence of feminine æsthetic taste is thus far wider than is manifested in direct feminine production and extends perhaps farther than that of masculine taste. That influence, it has often been pointed out, is illustrated in the sphere of interior decoration. The greater relative influence of American women is said to have had a favourable effect upon the development of interior architecture. The

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participation of women in business has had an even more notable influence upon office decoration and arrangement. Feminine influence manifests itself above all in checking ugliness. Whereas a purely man-made world can be indifferent to, and tolerant of the æsthetic atrocity which marks industrial civilization as a whole, such general indifference to æsthetic values and insensitivity to offensive ugliness can scarcely be imagined in a world in the construction of which women had a considerable share.

It is notable, however, that masculine industry in applied art has not only taken over provinces of production which originally were exclusively feminine, but owing to the greater scope and adventurousness of masculine creative power, has commonly surpassed feminine artistic production in its own sphere. Ceramic arts have reached a far higher level of artistic value as soon as they have passed into the hands of men. Feminine taste in rich textiles has come to be catered for chiefly by the ingenuity of men. The very creation of elegance in feminine attire is chiefly the production of the male couturier. Even in the household sphere of the kitchen, which has from the most primitive times onward been prescriptive to women, the male chef is the acknowledged superior of the female cook. It has been alleged that feminine preponderance has generally made for deterioration in the culinary art, and that feminine lack of appreciation in that respect is responsible for modes of eating which are distressing to the male epicure. In general, the greater boldness of masculine imagination has surpassed feminine taste in the very spheres which the latter has created.

Feminine artistic taste is at its best when it remains within the safe limits of the pleasant and agreeable and does not attempt ambitious flights of creative innovation. The same women who will exhibit perfect artistic judgment while dealing with harmonies of colour and line and whose sensitive instinct will be quick to detect a jarring

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note in such harmonies are sometimes capable of perpetrating outrageous æsthetic horrors when they attempt ambitious flights of pictorial creation. Hence it is that feminine taste has often been the patron of safe prettiness, daintiness, elegance rather than of the kind of artistic achievement which satisfies intellectual interest and imagination. Women have thus been sometimes capable of bad taste through conservative sentiment and the identification of sentimentality with artistic gratification. To some such fault corresponding to natural qualities of feminine taste may be ascribed the horrors of Victorian taste and the cult of prettiness which is sometimes fostered by feminine influence when it has already become offensive and effete to masculine æsthetic feeling. It may be suggested, on the other hand, that the inchoate disregard of imaginative and intellectual content conspicuous in modern art movements, and the insistence on colour and form for their own sake, may perhaps not be wholly unconnected with the increased influence of modern woman on artistic taste.

Industrialism and mass production, which in the ruthless pursuit of profit have been responsible for so much ugliness and for the sacrifice of æsthetic qualities, have also had the effect of restricting the artistic production of women in an even more complete manner than the prehistoric transfer of women's handicrafts to men. With the development of industrialism there has taken place a large demand for female labour, and thousands of women and girls have been transferred from the household and the farm to the factory. Women who were the original practitioners of textile and ceramic arts became, with the industrial revolution, the slaves of the machine in the mill and the pottery. The deftness, neatness, and quickness of feminine fingers, the taste of women for colour and decoration have been utilized in the minor tasks of industrial processes. Such exploited labour offers, however, no scope whatever for the exercise of real æsthetic qualities. The

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outrageous exploitation of cheap feminine labour has been carried out with no other view than to increase the output and the profits of mass production. In the manufacture of artificial flowers, for example, a large amount of female labour is employed, which constitutes so scandalous an instance of sweated employment as to render the use of its products equivalent to a moral offence. The wholesale bookbinding business, again, makes extensive use of female labour. The work is heavy and exacting, the hours long; the remuneration has been, in New York, sometimes as low as six or seven dollars per week.

The productive artistic activities of women have thus become entirely thrown back, so far as regards applied art, on handicrafts which can compete with industrial production under a heavy handicap only. The specific sexual characters which have been noted render it doubtful whether, apart from any traditional, cultural, and social disability, the qualities of feminine artistic talent will ever enable that competition to be effective under industrial conditions. The craftswoman does not enjoy, even in her restricted field, a signal superiority over the male craftsman. In the production of handmade jewellery, pewter work, small articles of decoration, and the like, the greater originality of the craftsman must in most instances be set against the reliability of feminine taste.

The many forms of design, such as that of wall-papers, textile patterns, upholstery, appear to offer a more promising field for adequate competitive production on the part of women. But even here the bolder experimentalism of the male designer weights the scales in his favour.

It is in such fields as interior architecture, decoration, landscape gardening that the sureness of feminine taste, the keener sense of colour, the combination of pleasantness, restfulness, and utilitarian fitness should give woman a real superiority in artistic achievement.

One may speculate whether conditions of individual

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competition between the sexes, which are without real precedent in past cultural history, may not in time lead women's artistic endowment to approximate more closely to the imaginative individuality which has hitherto been characteristic of the male artist. But such an obliteration of the differences in the psychological æsthetic characters of the sexes could only go hand in hand with the general obliteration of sexual differences. The latter can never be complete in the psychological aspect any more than in the physical and biological aspect. If the above considerations are well founded, the differences in artistic creative endowment which mark the æsthetic products of men and women respectively are an index of the deepest affective characters correlated with biological sexual functions. Social and cultural conditions can never altogether efface them.

A judicial estimate of the status and prospects of woman in the field of applied art under existing conditions is, it must be admitted, disappointing. It is, however, with woman's power to exercise in the future as in the past a part scarcely less important than that of the creative artist that her most significant share in æsthetic development probably lies. Experience shows that her influence can be a decisive factor in checking masculine proneness to tolerate unsightliness. Never was such a counteracting influence more needed than in the industrial civilization of the machine age.

Chapter Eleven

MODERN JOURNALISM

by HENRY F. PRINGLE

CHARLES A. DANA, who lived in more decorous days, did not bequeath to journalism a definition of a sex story. None is needed; every managing editor recognizes the sex story when it rises to the top of the day's grist of news. If he presides over the destinies of a conservative journal the editor may euphemize it as a "human interest" story and decide that it cannot displace the Manchurian situation on the front page. The tabloid editor, happy in the greater latitude allowed him, will summon reporters and camera men. The story will be embellished with photographic layouts. A headline writer will draw upon the peculiar jargon of his trade and the next morning a million or more readers will feast their eyes upon a legend proclaiming that "Love-lorn Sheik Slays Sweetie After Petting Party (Story on Page 3)."

Love may make the world revolve but the sex story speeds the printing presses. This applies to the so-called standard newspapers as well as to the tabloids. The tabloid editor will exaggerate an obscure scandal, which his conservative competitor can afford to ignore. If, however, the principals of the drama are people of importance in the community the difference in treatment will lie in the

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size of the type used and the number of photographs. If the facts are unusually novel, as many details will be supplied in the New York *Herald Tribune* as in the New York *Mirror*—and the managing editor of each paper will have judged the news correctly. Word that a man had bitten a dog, if the ancient Dana formula must be mentioned once again, would not be half so exciting to the reading public as the detailed testimony in a society divorce trial. We all read these sex stories, whether we claim respectability or not. We do so because we know or have heard of the people involved. Their misfortune is balm to our envy of their wealth and social position. Or perhaps, deep in our subconscious jungles, we know that their amorous escapades are quite attractive; in such headlines, but for timidity, would we, ourselves, parade.

Well-intentioned ladies and gentlemen frequently accuse American newspapers of obsession with sex, crime and its variants. The accusation may have basis enough, but it is an indictment more properly brought against the human race. It is obviously true that things appear in the news columns today which would have been barred twenty years ago. But many things, including conversation in the drawing-room and dialogue on the stage, have also changed. When *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was first offered to astounded theatre-goers, the resulting denunciation shook New York. With the passing of the years the indignation aroused by such themes faded and now only perversions, instead of normal sex problems, can inspire interest or alarm. So in literature. There were many who agreed with Theodore Roosevelt that the writings of Zola constituted "conscientious descriptions of the unspeakable," that Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* was a "filthy and repulsive book." They are not thus condemned in 1932 and it is hardly surprising if the daily newspaper has also changed with the times. The newspaper reflects life. This is its function; not reform.

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The critics of the newspaper fail to recognize news. No one is interested in a happy, orderly marriage. Matrimony becomes news—save on the society pages—only when it has failed; and the news value of the failure varies in direct proportion to the prominence of the people concerned. Headlines cannot be fashioned from the romance in which the young man courts the girl, wins her, and buys furniture on the installment plan. They flare only when the tenuous threads which bind the young man to routine, civilized existence snap. The newspaper, in so far as it treats of sex, is a mirror of the abnormal.

On the other hand, no doubt exists that journalism exploits both sex and crime for circulation purposes. The tabloid newspapers discovered, in sex, a new and powerful theme for the attraction of readers. They played it to an unprecedented extent. Their more respectable competitors struggled against the pricks of conscience at first, lost circulation, and then surrendered.

II

The tabloid, or illustrated daily, was virtually unknown in American journalism until after 1920. It has flourished, in a more restrained form, in England for many years. When the owners of the Chicago *Tribune* inaugurated the New York *Daily News* they began a drive for a new type of newspaper reader; the individual who could barely read. The news would be treated in the briefest and simplest manner and lavishly illustrated. Little or nothing would be printed concerning foreign affairs or other dull and serious events, and the emphasis placed, instead, upon crime, scandal, and sex. Before many years the *News* had two competitors in New York: the *Mirror*, which was started by William Randolph Hearst and subsequently sold, and the *Graphic*. The last of these three, owned by Bernarr Macfadden, the physical culturist, soon became one of the most extraordinary journals in history. Since

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New York is the stronghold of tabloid journalism, although by no means the only city where sex is exploited, it is relevant to examine the newspapers which brought such consternation to the editorial minds guiding their standard competitors.

Toward the end of 1931 a rather weird novel was published, the work of Emile Gauvreau, under the title *Hot News*. Despite its fictionalized form, *Hot News* will constitute an important source work for future historians of American journalism. Gauvreau, the author, was managing editor of the *Graphic* during the years of its most violent antics and is now editor of the New York *Mirror*. The veneer of fiction which supposedly disguises the characters in *Hot News* is very thin indeed. It may be assumed that Mr. Gauvreau has distorted the character of "Richard Bunnyweather," the owner of the New York *Comet*, and that it is not an accurate portrait of Bernarr Macfadden. Otherwise, however, the facts in *Hot News* appear to be extremely close to the truth. Nowhere else has a tabloid editor so frankly set forth the purposes, the ethics, and the motives of the new journalism.

The novel is written in the first person. It is the story of "Jonathan Peters"—certainly Gauvreau himself—who is hired by "Richard Bunnyweather" as the editor of a new tabloid, the *Comet*. "Peters" is summoned for a conference shortly before publication starts. He receives his instructions from the owner.

"Young man, I have awaited this day for years," begins "Bunnyweather." "I want to tell the truth in my newspaper in a way in which it has never been told before. I want to give the nation a newspaper which is stripped of hypocrisy. I want to conduct it in such a way that everybody will talk about it. Give them news, but make it *hot news!* Give it to them sizzling from the griddle. Remember that I am the champion of the common people. Never print anything that a scrubwoman in a skyscraper cannot

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understand. Talk to them in pictures, flaring, glaring pictures. Sit down on that curbstone and chat with them! Catch their eyes so that I can pour my message into their brains. . . . After we have reached our first million we can afford to be more refined, but until then, by God, give it to them hot! Remember that people are really interested only in two things, *sex and money*—and in that order!"

If we turn from *Hot News* to Mr. Macfadden's *Graphic*, always remembering that "Bunnyweather" is a character of fiction, we find that some such instructions were followed to the last exclamation point. The *News* and the *Mirror* were already flourishing when, in 1924, Macfadden revealed his plans for a tabloid. The *Graphic*, he announced, would fight for the masses. It would work for the abolition of government censorship, for "the elimination of graft and favoritism in politics and business." Its slogan, like that of certain of its founder's magazines, was to be "Nothing but the Truth." And within a few weeks, the *Graphic* was publishing articles under such intriguing captions as "Unmarried Mother Publicly Shamed by Court Order," "I Did Not Marry My Brother," "Stick to Women, They're Safer than Horses," and "Unwed Mother Unafraid to Die."

Let us again look at "Richard Bunnyweather." Gauvreau puts into his mouth the wise observation: "Remember that people are interested in only two things—sex and money." But the *Graphic* found a third during the second year of its existence; the peculiar enthusiasms of people who were subnormal. Among the headlines of that year were: "Let's Be Lesbians, Urges Cult Woman," "Tots Tortured by Cult to Drive Out Devils," and "Three Women Lashed in Nude Orgy."

Meanwhile the other tabloids continued to find, although they did not descend to the level of the *Graphic*, that sex sent their circulation soaring. The *News*, the *Mirror*, and

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the *Graphic* did more than merely develop customers among those who had never read a newspaper before; they began to draw from the standard dailies. Managing editors who had never worried unduly about sex in journalism were seriously disturbed.

III

The exploitation of sex is not new. When Hearst desired to accelerate war with Spain in 1897 he brought a young Cuban girl to New York and published sensational stories of abuses by the Spaniards. Anna Held's press agent was aware, when he invented the yarn about milk baths, that publicity would result because the story would titillate newspaper readers. Yet the average honest, intelligent newspaper editor has had a very definite, if informal, code on the subject. He would print sex stories when they "crossed the public conscience in the courts," a phrase which one editor evolved. That is to say, it was unethical to send a reporter to pry into private affairs. It was, on the other hand, proper to cover a divorce trial. If some banker was sued for breach of promise by a chorus girl the facts would be duly recorded. In the conservative journals the accounts would be rather brief. In the yellow journals the case would be treated as sensationally as the obscenity laws allowed.

The divorce sensation of 1921-1922, for instance, was the Stillman case. This was an extremely extended washing of private linen in public and most of the newspapers in the United States reported it at great length. The files of the *New York Times*, however, reveal that it was handled with decorum in that journal. The *Times* went furthest along the road toward salaciousness when certain letters, supposedly addressed by Mrs. Anne U. Stillman to Fred Beauvais, the Indian guide, were read in court. "I love every pore of your skin," she was quoted as saying in one of these epistles. "I love the dear ground you stand

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on. I love you beyond words." But this was the exception rather than the rule. Then came the tabloids; their circulation continued to mount as 1925 arrived.

In the fall of that year a young man of social prominence, Leonard Kip Rhinelander, brought suit against his wife, Alice Jones Rhinelander, for annulment of their marriage. He contended that she was partly of Negro blood and that he had been deceived as to this fact when they were married. The suit was tried at White Plains in Westchester, New York, and the orgy of sex in journalism which followed reached new heights. Mr. Gauvreau gives us the background of this case, too, in *Hot News*, again with transparent disguises. The case of "Rip Landecker," he writes, enabled him to print "at least one hundred pictures of Rip and Rip's bride in every conceivable attitude":

I published the reports of the trial verbatim. I reproduced unvarnished details never before printed in the pinkest of the pinks. Consumed by morbid curiosity, the public rushed to the newsstands to buy the *Comet*. Soon they were devouring it. To stop the stampede not only our tabloid competitors but the standard newspapers printed salacious items which had never before spiced the pages of a respectable journal. We made the standard papers pink and the pinkies scarlet.

The New York *Times* was one of the standard papers thus touched with pink. The Rhinelander trial remained on the first page for almost a week. On November 13, 1925, when letters written to Rhinelander by his dusky bride were read, the *Times* printed a number of them and began its account of the proceedings as follows:

There were some letters of very real feeling, letters which showed sincerity. She wrote poetry to him, poetry with truly Negro rhythm which was so superior to her ordinary forms of expression that it seemed as if she must have copied the lines from a popular song:

"Kisses, dear, from you, can cheer me when I'm blue,
Your gentle lips have always thrilled me through;

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I need caressing, too;
There's happiness I can't express
In each kiss from you."

On the following night, when the gigantic presses of the New York *Times* roared again, they immortalized more poetry and additional letters. On November 17, the unfortunate Kip Rhinelander being subjected to lengthy cross-examination, the *Times* published three and a half columns on the trial; more than on any other subject of local or international importance that day. On November 24, Alice Jones was required partially to disrobe in the jury room and expose her pigmentation. This ethnological experiment was also recorded by the *Times* under the headline: "Rhinelander's Wife Cries Under Ordeal. Taken Into Jury Room with Husband and Lawyers to See Color of Her Skin."

It can be argued, of course, that a paper with the prestige and power of the *Times* should have ignored this sensational garbage and devoted the space to, let us say, a meeting of the League of Nations. The editor probably received many letters insisting that he had betrayed the principle of "All the News That's Fit to Print." But I do not agree with these criticisms. In the first place, I doubt that any reader was greatly harmed by the accounts of the Rhinelander case; it was a tawdry and vulgar brawl, not at all exciting. In the second place, newspaper publishing is a highly competitive business. Again it is interesting to glance at the pages of *Hot News*. When the "Rip Lan-decker" suit reached the climax of the disrobing act, the resourceful *Comet* editor had one of his happiest inspirations. An actual photograph of the pulsating scene was impossible and "Jonathan Peters" invented a device which came to be known (in Mr. Macfadden's *Graphic* as well as in the *Comet* as a "composograph.") To put it bluntly, he faked a photograph in which a chorus girl posed as Mrs.

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Rhinelander. Then a face of the Negress was pasted over that of the model.

"That one picture," Mr. Gauvreau boasts, "sold half a million copies of the paper. The 'composograph' opened a new chapter in the history of tabloid journalism. It was now possible to make what appeared to be photographic illustrations of any scene anywhere, without being present."

IV

The established journalistic standards and traditions were in grave peril by the close of 1925. Vaguely bothered, no doubt, by the extent to which they had followed the tabloids in the Rhinelander trial, the editors of the standard newspapers were confronted by another crisis in 1926. On January 4 of that year Ellin Mackay, the daughter of Clarence H. Mackay, was married to Irving Berlin, the song writer. Their attachment had been rumoured along Broadway for several months and had been stoutly denied. Mr. Mackay, in addition to being vastly wealthy, was prominent in the affairs of the Roman Catholic Church while Mr. Berlin was a Russian Jew who had once been a "singing waiter" in an East Side New York saloon.

Under any circumstances such a marriage was news. No criticism attaches to the fact that newspapers everywhere published every possible detail of the marriage and of the friendship which led to it. They were, in my opinion, justified in making known the apparent opposition of the bride's father. Under the code of decent journalism, however, the couple should have been left alone after the first day or two. Instead, they were pursued by the hounds of the press wherever they went. They were photographed to exhaustion. "Tell us how happy you are," the sob sisters begged Mr. Berlin until his nerves were at the breaking point. A tabloid sent reporters along Broadway to ask

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stenographers and telephone girls whether "you would do what Ellin Mackay did."

What attitude did the established standard daily papers take? Here was an excellent opportunity to test their ethics. The Mackay-Berlin romance had not "crossed the public conscience in the courts"; these two young people were private citizens involved in neither scandal nor litigation. I am quite certain that the first impulse of the average editor was to drop the story as soon as possible. The new hysteria of Tabloidia had corrupted him, however. He commanded his reporters to join in the chase. Here is the day to day record as it appeared in the *New York Times* index:

January 6. Mrs. Berlin to seek blessing of father, honeymoon at Atlantic City.

January 7. Berlin returns from Atlantic City with bride; she is sad over father's silence; plans to attend wedding of Consuelo Vanderbilt.

January 8. In seclusion, bride fails to attend wedding of Consuelo Vanderbilt.

January 9. Berlin and bride sail today for Europe; her father still silent.

January 10. Berlin sails on honeymoon without bride's father's blessing.

January 12. Friends try to protect Berlin and bride from publicity in London.

January 16. Arrival in London.

January 17. Guarded in London.

January 18. Berlin sings at Kit Kat Club, London, at farewell party to S. Tucker.

January 24. Berlin answers to questions on his happiness.

January 26. Will compose score of musical comedy; he plans to stay abroad with wife for six months.

February 4. Berlin's marriage to Ellin Mackay recorded in Dilatory Domiciles section of Social Register.

February 8. Berlin and wife arrive at Lisbon.

February 12. Berlin and bride reported to be honored in Europe.

March 4. Berlin and bride plan to remain in London until fall.

March 7. Berlin and bride spend month in Madeira.

March 22. Berlin at Lisbon on way to London.

March 23. Berlin touches at Cherbourg on way to England.

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Just as though things were not bad enough already in the world of journalism, the year brought forth a completely fantastic individual who proceeded to monopolize the headlines. The affairs of Edward W. Browning, a New York real estate dealer who had amassed a fortune, were aired at length during most of 1926. It was revealed that he had adopted one young girl and had then changed his mind. He next announced that he would marry another girl, one "Peaches" Heenan. Old men had made themselves ridiculous on countless occasions in the past but Browning, as far as I know, was the first to derive enormous satisfaction from the notoriety he attracted. He became the First Citizen of Tabloidia and his grinning countenance stared out almost daily from the front pages of the *Mirror*, the *Graphic*, and the *News*. He was universally known as "Daddy" and his bride as "Peaches." Whenever public interest started to fade he would connive at some fresh sensation and the most successful stunt was a suit in which "Peaches" sued her "Daddy" for a separation. Their marriage, their honeymoon, their quarrels, their love letters had all been recorded at great length before the suit was tried. The case was to be the Trial of the Century and would be heard in the historic edifice at White Plains where Kip Rhinelander had sought to free himself from his Negro bride.

The editors who hoped that journalism might remain a profession were again worried. The New York *World* even took editorial cognizance of the dilemma in which it found itself. It criticized a preliminary court ruling that the trial would be public and said that the great judicial system of the State of New York should not be used to create a holiday in Tabloidia. In the inner councils of the *World*, meanwhile, idealistic notions were momentarily entertained; consideration was given to the wisdom of ignoring the Peaches-Daddy circus altogether. In the end, wiser counsel prevailed. The *World* sent its staff

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men to the scene and had a photographer on hand as well. The New York *Herald Tribune*, although it carefully covered the court sessions, placed a wreath on the altar of decency; it refused to use the nicknames, "Daddy" and "Peaches," in any of its despatches. The *Times* did not permit the trial to pollute its front pages but allowed ample space in the inside sections of the paper. On February 1, 1927, there were three columns on page three. The story was vividly written, as though by a member of the sports staff. It told of the fakers selling souvenirs in front of the White Plains courthouse. "This was a day of jokes and laughter in the Browning separation suit" was the opening sentence.

The tabloids, obviously, surpassed all their previous efforts. Mr. Macfadden's *Graphic* used "composographs" daily; faked pictures which showed the eminent realtor and his youthful bride in a variety of unconventional poses. It added 250,000 readers for a time. But even the tabloid editors were alarmed by the uproar of protest which followed their exploitation of sex in the Browning trial. One or two editors made public confession of their sins. They promised to fumigate their pages and, to a degree, they did so. The journalistic excesses of the Browning case have since stood as a record without equal.

New York newspapers are the largest, with a few exceptions, in the country. Their influence, quite apart from size, on journalistic style and traditions is profound. The judgment of New York editors regarding news is followed almost slavishly in other parts of the nation. Thus the press association wires carried long despatches on the Stillman, Rhinelander, and Browning cases. The emphasis upon sex, modified only partially by local conservatism or prejudice, has been fairly universal in American journalism. Last summer I was in San Francisco at the

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time of a very unimportant murder. Some mentally defective youth had robbed an old woman and then had killed her; the story had absolutely no lasting interest. The San Francisco papers, however, promptly brought forth a girl and announced that she was the murderer's sweetheart. Arrangements were made whereby she telephoned to him at the jail. A stenographer was stationed at an extension and took down every word of the maudlin conversation which followed. Thus a very dull story was kept alive for a week or more. When, in Arizona, a woman murdered two other women some months later the case was inflated to the breaking-point. The juvenile quarrel between Peter Arno, the artist, and Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., at Reno, Nevada, during the same summer offered another opportunity to increase circulation. Had the artist smiled at Vanderbilt's wife? Would he run fast enough to escape the avenging bullets from Vanderbilt's gun? These questions shook the Pacific Coast like an earthquake.

Sex pays. Vulgarity pays. All the canons of journalism cannot overcome these unhappy facts. New York State prepared, early in 1932, to execute a murderer in Sing Sing prison. "Crowley's Sweetie Wins Fight to Visit Death Cell" announced the *New York Graphic*. The *Mirror* headline was: "Chair Tonight Gets Two-Gun Crowley Cursing Girl Betrayers." It subsequently developed that the supposed sweetheart had been commissioned by the *New York Journal* to write an account of Crowley's last hours. Girls jilting brokers, brokers choking chorus girls, bankers being sued for breach of promise, divorce actions, rape, seduction; such are the daily events of Tabloidia. They are always illustrated, eternally and constantly illustrated, with pictures of girls wearing bathing suits, girls in filmy underwear, girls crossing silken knees, girls wearing almost nothing at all; such are the citizens of Tabloidia.

Sex in journalism is reflected in circulation statistics.

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According to the most recent sworn statements, the New York *Graphic* has 262,498 readers, the *News* 1,343,856, and the *Mirror* 584,488—a total for the tabloids of 2,190,833. The New York *Herald Tribune* has 319,245, the New York *Times* 452,929, and the New York *American* 321,105—a total of 1,093,279. And the New York *American*, although necessarily included among the standard newspapers, is hardly conservative where sex is concerned. The ratio, then, is more than two to one in favour of the tabloids.

But all this does not mean that journalism as a decent profession is dead. Circulation does not always mean revenue. There is nothing to indicate that the New York *News*, by far the most successful of the tabloids, has in any way damaged the earning capacity of the *Times*. The *Graphic*, for all its composographs and vulgarity and filth, has only 260,000 readers and cannot be making a fortune for Bernarr Macfadden. It would be amusing if the tabloids were really to teach people to read, only to have them weary of the salacious and graduate to the standard papers after a year or two. No one can say whether this is so. No one can say, either, whether the sex story will not be used to an even greater extent in the years ahead. The indications, I think, are the other way. Even sex is rather an old story. The day may come when it is no longer news.

Chapter Twelve

MODERN ADVERTISING

by SILAS BENT

HENRY ADAMS, lamenting that "an American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist," tried to recall some one in his country who had insisted on the power of sex. He could think only of Walt Whitman, of Bret Harte, with limitations, and of one or two painters, "for the flesh-tones." All the rest had used sex for sentiment, he vowed, never for force—"Eve was a tender flower, and Herodias an unfeminine horror." He did not say what they thought of Jezebel or Salome or Borgia. "Like the American language and American education," he concluded, American art "was as far as possible sexless."

Admittedly an eighteenth century American by tradition and training and mental posture, Adams came by these reflections at the very outset of the twentieth century, a score of years before sex had demonstrated its dynamic force as a factor in advertising. How could he, an ingrowing Calvinist, foresee that Eve was to appear in the pages of our magazines and newspapers and on our billboards, sometimes adorned with not much more than a fig leaf, sometimes in the very costume she wore in the Garden; how could he anticipate that a wanton, on behalf of a tooth

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paste or a toilet soap, would thumb her nose at John the Baptist? But he would have foreseen, had he been the seventh son of a seventh son, that the wanton was doomed like the other Herodias to die in exile.

Sex as a dynamic power in advertising began to come by its inches and its horsepower in the United States just three centuries after Bacon was at such pains to teach the subjects of James I, here and abroad, that the development of forces was the essence of science. Advertising is scientific in so far as it develops social and commercial and industrial forces along predetermined lines. In its earliest form it was devoted to the communication of facts, but it became adept in persuasion and in overcoming sales resistance. As an accessory to the later phase, the sex motif had its innings. "You," said Demosthenes to his rival Æschines, "make them say, 'How well he speaks!' I make them say, 'Let us march against Philip!'" It is not enough nowadays for the reader to say, "What a nice thing that is"; the reader must be made to say, "Let us march forth and buy that thing." The appeal to primary sexual urges thus had a certain Demosthenesan justification.

Even as late as 1920 advertisements of swim-suits showed young ladies in mountainous coiffures, stockings and two-piece garments, full-skirted. It is more than a coincidence that the theories of Sigmund Freud did not become a fad throughout this country until that year. True, the Viennese had visited this country back in 1909, and his writings, dark enough in themselves, had been translated into English through which one might see as through a glass more darkly. But not until André Tridon and a host of imitators began to flood our library shelves with a Freudianism which a subway guard could understand did the thing assume camp-meeting proportions. Writers were found who could popularize the Oedipus complex, ambivalence, defence mechanism, persecution

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mania and inferiority fixation, the invert, hebephrenic, and manic-depressive. It was then that the freudulent vocabulary became common gossip and every dinner-table a clinic.

John Bagnell Bury, when Regius professor of modern history at Cambridge, developed what he called a "contingency" theory, whereby he made rather light of obvious general causes and emphasized incidents, personalities, and influences in explaining historical events. Freud was the contingent influence which explained the fever of sex in our advertising and the height of its temperature in the counting-house pages of our publications.

Nor was advertising, obviously, the only activity, custom, or institution which felt the influence. Our greater candour in conversation, and the primitive note of the tom-tom running through our dance-music, bespoke that influence; so did cubism in art, semi-nudity in dress, and garbage in our literature. Let others deal with those matters if they will, and allot to Freudianism whatsoever blame or credit they choose, or none of either. The pendulum is swinging back. Already the ladies are wearing bustles. It is no longer bad form not to have been psychoanalyzed. Even the debunking technique in biography, whereby greatness was made an accident of the libido, is passé.

It need not concern us, either, that the practice of psychoanalysis, oftentimes by charlatans, left a wide wake of divorce, insanity, and suicide. We are not discussing therapeutics but a certain phase of publicity. It seems to be commonly accepted that Freudianism is on the way out, although some of the patterns it set will continue always, I do not doubt, to be useful to the psychologist within limited fields. If the Darwinian now occupies in biology much the same status as the Fundamentalist in religion, we are safe in assuming that the Freudian will be relegated to a similar position. His cult will become the stamping ground of the Old Fogey, if it is not that already; for the arbitrary assumption that a single set of "conditioned

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responses"—to shift for a moment to Watsonian terminology—embraces all the plot and circumstance of the human drama is no more convincing in the case of Freud than it was in the case of Rabelais, when he introduced to Pantagruel a fellow named Gaster, who had discovered that all man's arts, powers, motivations, and progress were an outgrowth of hunger for food. The sublimation of stomach seems to me as sensible as the sublimation of sex. I venture this as a personal aside; I would be the last to deny the potency of sex appetites and impulses, or to dispute that sex is responsible for two-thirds of our greatest art.

Freud, to be sure, merely crystallized and overemphasized what many others had been saying before him. William James, writing about the time that Henry Adams was bewailing the impotence of sex in this country, derided "the re-interpretation of religion as perverted sexuality." He commented on the Catholic taunt that the Reformation sprang from Luther's wish to marry a nun; and thought it worth while to note the common tendency to attribute religious conversion to a crisis of puberty and adolescence, to explain the macerations of saints and the devotion of missionaries as due to the parental instinct. "But then," he asked, and this is reminiscent of our Rabelais, "why not equally call religion an aberration of the digestive function, and prove one's point by the worship of Bacchus and Ceres, or by the ecstatic feelings of some other saints about the Eucharist?"

But, James added, one might as well interpret religion as a perversion of the respiratory function. "The Bible is full of the language of respiratory oppression." The religious life, he found,—and he might as readily have included the whole of life,—"depends just as much upon the spleen, the pancreas, and the kidneys as on the sexual apparatus, and the whole theory has lost its point in evapo-

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rating into a vague general assertion of the dependence, *somewhat*, of the mind upon the body."

In spite of differences in nomenclature, the warring sects of psychologists appear to agree at least in this, that the human being does think with his whole body; and the advertising man, in his reliance upon sex, might quote Spinoza, who declared: "I will analyze the actions and appetites of men as if it were a question of lines, of planes and solids." To answer the more blue-nosed of the religionists, he might quote Taine: "Whether facts be moral or physical, it makes no matter. . . . Vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar." Nor need anyone, unless he subscribes unreservedly to the doctrine of total depravity, assume that sex is always sinful; time was when men generally thought it denoted strength.

Whereas the bathing girl of 1920 was pictured in stockings and a skirt, her sister of 1931 was portrayed on occasion in the altogether. Before me there lies a clipping from a daily paper in my home town in Kentucky of an advertisement of a hardware company, saying that "when the heat waves burn through summer clothes, and there just doesn't seem to be a comfortable spot anywhere . . . it's time then for cool waters." It is illustrated with silhouettes of two sweet young things ready to step into their one-piece suits. One expects that advertisements of feminine underthings will be decorated in some such fashion, but when it comes to bathing suits a mere male may speculate as to why it is that the advertiser seems seldom to think of the masculine figure. Has that no sex appeal?

Robert Louis Stevenson, commenting on a familiar passage from Walt Whitman, singles out a phrase, "the love of healthy women for the manly form," and tells us:

If he had said "the love of healthy men for the female form," he would have said almost a silliness; for the thing has never been dis-

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sembled out of delicacy, and is so obvious as to be a public nuisance. But by reversing it, he tells us something not unlike news; something that sounds quite freshly in words; and, if the reader be a man, gives him a moment of great self-satisfaction and spiritual aggrandizement.

Elsewhere I have descanted upon advertising as a kind of news, and it seems to me that in this passage Stevenson gives a hint about masculine interest, self-satisfaction, and aggrandizement which quick-witted advertising men have not exploited as they might. The satisfied young man with the determined chin and faultless collar, it must be admitted, has become so familiar that he has passed into the American idiom; and even those who are responsible for what seems to me the silliest slogan of the current crop assure us that "whether you are a stalwart steel-worker or a dainty *débutante*" it is still worth while to "keep kissable." A Mere Man may be seen at the same table with a Fair Lady in the advertisements of a tea cracker. Perhaps the male element is no more ignored than is to be expected, when we remember that the other sex spends about ninety per cent of the money spent at retail in this country. Advertising men are not only quick-witted but hard-headed, much given to charts and graphs, and quick to tabulate returns. It may be that they do not need Stevenson's advice.

"Beauty is not for youth alone," cry the manufacturers of a saline water reassuringly, and illustrate the advertisement with a nude feminine figure which is better looking than most figures in the flesh. But are women the only persons who wish to achieve internal cleanliness lest they have shallow skins, which "spoil good looks, kill youthful alertness and charm"? Your barber will tell you how many of his male customers have him massage their faces. Nevertheless, it is motion picture actresses, not actors, who are recruited to tell about the virtues of a "roughage" in their food, which causes "perfect" elimination and gives them luxurious figures.

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Soap manufacturers play not so much upon the social conscience as upon the sex consciousness, and one of them has reduced the smell of perspiration to a pair of initials, presumably by the inverse process of that advertiser who learned that bad breath could be called halitosis. (One of the earliest newspaper advertisements, printed in the seventeenth century, told of a "mouthwater which . . . preserves the Gums and Teeth, takes off all smells proceeding from bad teeth, etc." Halitosis is just a later wrinkle.) "B. O." is the horrendous symbol explaining the fate of "A Flirt with an Aching Heart." The bitter truth was, *she couldn't hold her admirers.* "Gayest of the gay, she seemed. But when alone—the tears came! Lonely, unhappy, no lasting friendships—all because of 'B. O.'"

Take no chances, dear reader; place no reliance in lotions and powders, for the pores are constantly giving off odour-causing waste—a quart daily! The only hope is to be found in a "bland, creamy, pore-purifying lather." This will keep the complexion lovely, and "quickly coax back fresh, healthy radiance to dull, cloudy skins." After one glance at the beautiful but despairing girl in the picture, and another glance at the inset showing a quite plain girl chatting with two captive swains, what does one do? One marches forth to buy that healthy radiance.

It is not true, I venture to assert, that women are the only purchasers of bath soaps. In my young manhood I read a book review which spoke of one of the characters as "an unbathed person, in whose arms a woman would not care to lie," and after thirty years I recall that phrase verbatim. But the manufacturers of another saponaceous detergent (this phrase is offered free, in place of the Bok Prize, for the use of the advertising agency which discovered halitosis), which began life as a lowly laundry preparation but was elevated to the purposes of the lavatory, introduced it to the market through a series of advertisements showing ravishing theatrical stars, each in a bath

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specially constructed—of theatre properties—and each of them a woman. All were loud in praise of that particular detergent; and the series was so successful that the manufacturers introduced the sex motif into their announcements of the laundry preparation. This was a daring thing to do, for no woman, one may suppose, likes to admit that she does her washing. But the sex motif was injected through the simple expedient of calling this preparation the very best thing for stockings; and although a woman's magazine had said long before, when the skirt shrank above the knee, that legs were no longer news, the illustrations were made good, presumably, by including ballet girls, whose skirts fell but little below the waistline. And there was the economic factor, too; for it was said that the preparation made stocking money go twice as far. Not stockings alone, but lingerie, acknowledge the refreshing and beautiful effect of this magic decoction. What is the tribute men pay to femininity? Adoration, of course; if you don't believe it, ask Dorothy Dix, who lent her name to the lingerie advertisement. "I have never known a man yet who didn't adore that most endearing, appealing quality we call femininity," said this dispenser of balm-in-Gilead to the heart-sick; and the road to that "instantly contagious" charm, so she said, lay through the laundry preparation. A Mere Man was permitted to intrude upon this picture; he wore a dinner jacket and was either inspecting the lady's hand or was about to kiss it. This, however, was an inset; the lady in the main picture was on the verge of adventuring forth into an evening's adoration.

Now, it is obvious and it is natural and no one can gainsay that it is proper that a certain degree of sex appeal should be found in advertisements of bathing suits and underthings and cosmetics. Even the illustrations in *Godey's Lady's Book*, published for an audience as strait-laced as any we have bred in this country, carried a captivating assurance that the wearers of the garments were desirable

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women. Clothes are décor, calculated to attract the opposite sex; they are the cause of modesty, not its effect. Cosmetics too are décor, and there was a time when they were supposed to be immodest. The American woman no longer thinks that rouge and the lipstick are vicious; she thinks they are a good investment; and to a certain extent the advertiser has been responsible for accustoming her to habiliments and accessories which were relegated in other days to the hussy. Who shall say that this is a step backward instead of forward, debauchery rather than enlightenment? Who shall say that the débutante of the Scarlet Decade in Advertising, with her cigarette, her boyish bob, her short skirts, and sleek calves, was one whit less a social asset than Mr. Godey's ladies with their padded hips and padded busts and padded pompadours?

But one may wonder why sexiness should be incorporated in advertisements of yeast, guaranteed to give, vim, vigour, and vitality; or in attempting to sell automobiles, house paint, fountain pens, and smoking materials. It is worth observing that, although we suppose Paris to be the fountain-head of everything risqué, and French fiction to be the most titillating produced in the habitable globe, American advertising methods, with their sex motif, were a failure in France; Henry Ford, whose advertisements were often made attractive by the presence of pretty women in his flivvers, took his account out of the hands of an American advertising agency in Paris and turned it over to an indigenous firm. If pictures of pretty women help to sell automobiles, let us have them; they won't bite us, and they have impeccable precedent; long before they were introduced into advertisements they were put on the covers of certain magazines, obviously because it was thought that their romantic suggestion would prove a drawing card and a selling point.

As for smoking materials, we are now urged to buy a certain cigar because in that way we assert our manhood;

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and the cigarette manufacturers have been competitors in glorifying muliebrity. Hear Senator Reed Smoot, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in introducing a bill for Federal censorship of this kind of advertising:

I rise to denounce insidious cigarette campaigns now being promoted by those manufacturing interests whose only god is profit, whose only bible is the balance sheet, whose only principle is greed. I rise to denounce the unconscionable, heartless, and destructive attempts to exploit the women and youth of our country in the interests of a few powerful tobacco organizations whose rapacity knows no bounds.

Well, the men, women, and youth of our country are “exploited” to the tune of more than one hundred billion cigarettes annually, and appear to survive; and although some of the cigarette advertising is a bit silly, it is worth remembering that Senator Smoot manifests no such high moral indignation in the high tariff on cane sugar; yet there are those who perceive ethical implications in such a tariff. Certain manœuvres in regard to the sugar tariff caused a small scandal in Washington, but I do not know that cigarette advertising has brought us scandal, large or small. Let us hark back to Taine, and agree that whether the facts be moral or physical—or financial—“it makes no matter.”

We may take somewhat more seriously the attitude of the Federal Trade Commission, whose members want to know whether the testimonials given by society leaders and delectable stage stars for cathartics, cosmetics, soaps, beds, anti-fat and anti-smell commodities are based on a first-hand, empirical knowledge of the thing advertised. They want further to know the motive back of the bally-hoo, and if the testimonial was paid for they think the fact should be stated in the advertisement. Their inquiries have shown, so they announce, that nine times out of ten such testimonials are delivered for revenue only, and often

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are entirely false, since the witness had no acquaintance with the commodity.

The testimonial advertisement, of course, has a somewhat disreputable ancestry, and long antedates the widespread use of the sex motif. It was for years a favourite weapon of the patent medicine quack, and is still utilized in that way in the columns of a thousand complaisant and none too scrupulous newspapers; but it so happens that the majority of the cases investigated by the Federal Trade Commission involved some phase of sex appeal. This is about the worst thing, from an official standpoint, that can be said about sex in advertising; although it may as well be set down, unofficially and to keep the record straight, that some of the sexy advertising is downright vulgar and a little of it stupid. It is decreasing in volume and violence, partly because its novelty is tarnished and partly because of a suspicion that it never exercised quite the pulling power attributed to it; but it has not by any means gone by the board. Like the poor, we will have it always with us. The advertiser has used at times deception as well as truth, cajolery as well as persuasion, vulgarity as well as beauty; and if he continues to mend his ways—for his ways have revealed a fairly constant improvement through the ages—probably it will be because of an improved taste and a higher standard of consumption in his market as a whole.

Advertising is an ancient art. In the ruins of Thebes papyrus was found offering rewards for the return of runaway slaves three thousand years ago. The Greeks said solemnly that Venus employed Mercury as a sort of Town Crier on Olympus. In Rome professional men told what they could do in signs on the walls of their homes. In Herculaneum and Pompeii baths and gladiatorial combats were advertised; an earthen lamp bore on its base the name of the maker and the price, one drachma.

In those days this form of publicity was confined to in-

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formation, and it continued to be so until after the seventeenth century, when the walls of St. Paul's Cathedral were a popular billboard. As illiteracy retreated and the stereotypes of social life were altered advertising changed its tone and became minatory, forensic, or persuasive. There was a renaissance here as elsewhere, influenced largely by the machine and the coming of the industrial revolution. In a world where most of us have goods or services to sell, and where all of us need to buy goods and services, it is essential that we learn through the printed word and illustration, radio, motion pictures, or, the spoken word, where, when, and at what price we may obtain what we want; and advertising is not only the obvious but the needed medium of this communication.

Thus there has been erected a huge and complicated machinery specializing in this sort of publicity. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who said in 1759 that "the trade of advertising is now so near to perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement," would have gasped if he had suspected what were to be the developments in that technique and in its mechanics. Assuredly he could not have conceived the fact if he had been told that at the end of the Scarlet Decade the people of the United States alone would be investing close to two billion dollars a year in this one vehicle.

That some of the advertising was fraudulent need not disturb us overmuch. We have hypocritical psalm singers and shyster lawyers. The chairman of the Federal Trade Commission estimated that in 1928 half a billion dollars was exacted from the people of this country through dishonest advertising, but at best this was a guess, and no part of the spoils was attributed specifically to the sex element in advertising, which happens to be our concern at the moment. The greatest part, as a fact, was apportioned to fake announcements which preyed upon the igno-

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rant and the sick. Advertising agencies themselves have been active in combating these practices.

Advertising agencies have not been so active in opposing, but, on the other hand, appear generally to have encouraged, the appeal to lower motives and impulses, such as fear, vanity, social competition, snobbery, shame, and ostentation; and highly reputable business concerns evidently have encouraged the agencies. In arousing these primary appetites and emotions the sex motif has been more potent, or at least more insistently employed, than any other.

Although honesty and accuracy prevail as a rule in the statement of fact, it cannot be said that they prevail in portraying the sexual advantages of buying this or that commodity, or the sexual disadvantages of doing without it. A cook book which was advertised as telling more than one hundred "new ways to a man's heart" might more accurately have been described as telling ways to his stomach. A famous dancer sold a sumptuous edition of her biography by direct-mail advertising which carried not only her own photograph but a panel of five bacchantes more scantily clad. "From weakling to Hercules," said the teacher of a system of breathing. Dance-music was advertised as "Primitive! poignant! swaying! throbbing!"; a course in a commercial art school was advertised with the picture of a stage nymph under the heading, "How to read your future." The purveyors of a condensed milk exhibited a young bride being lectured at the table by her mother-in-law—"On Trial!" Young women in lingerie were expected to attract the eye to an advertisement of a disinfectant. It seems hardly necessary to dwell on the preposterous promises made by beauty doctors and some manufacturers of hair dyes, lipsticks, cold creams, manicure accessories, tooth pastes, and so on; or even to do more than mention in passing an incense which "preserves the ancient secret of creating the romantic atmos-

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sphere that makes beauty lovelier." Even a cooking machine was presented as a means to "Beauty that endures," and an electric iron was named for a famous rose.

A valid moralistic criticism of sex in advertising might better be based on their disingenuousness than on the prudishness of the critic.

It is unnecessary, surely, to discriminate among the hundreds of theories of sex and its origin, or to catalogue the emotions and impulses derivative therefrom. It is easy enough to see why the alert advertising man, when this country became preoccupied with the Freudian cult, found what he thought would prove a fertile field in vanity, possessiveness, parental pride and anxiety, social ambition, competitiveness, egotism, romance, and the female form more or less divine. If he has tilled the field not wisely but too well, he has at any rate learned a lesson from it, and perhaps he has taught his public some lessons. Neither he nor the object of his wiles has any special occasion to point with pride or view with alarm. The phenomenon is worth attention as a phase of our life, intimately related with other national phenomena.

That the nation has become more coarse-minded as a consequence of this flood of sex in the advertising pages is likely to be the contention of those who think that one should maintain a poetic, if not religious, attitude toward love, and the contention has at least a certain merit. Amy Lowell, in her biography of John Keats, stated the viewpoint eloquently. "What are wars," she demanded, "what is history, tales of heroes and omens—is not love more important than these?" And she quoted a passage from "Endymion":

. . . Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,

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Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorello in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires.

"Well," Miss Lowell continued, "is he not right? If we have the courage to look matters squarely in the face, and observe the universe with the unprejudiced eye of science instead of the sentimental one of conventional and conventional religion, shall we not come to the same conclusion? Sexual love is the most stupendous fact of the universe, and the most magical mystery our poor blind senses know. To Keats it signified the penetralia of religion, the purity and grandeur of Godhead. He approaches it with awe and reverence, but also with rapture." And she berated the commentators who had tried to twist the idealization of sexual love into a soul striving toward "a pallid, celibate heaven."

That the purveyors of purgatives and cigarettes should make capital of "the most stupendous fact in the universe" is certain to shock the sensitive. But we need not expect to find pure poetry in our advertising pages; the best we can hope for is the troubadour tinkle. And we need not expect the poetic attitude, for the pages are written by tried and tested go-getters. Perhaps Keats sublimated sex nobly while Freud sublimated it basely. That issue does not bother the advertiser, who wishes to sell his product on a sublime scale and is undeterred by other sublimations.

Advertising, like sensationalism journalism, thrives largely on current fads, and augments them when its interests lie in that direction. Of a certain type of advertising it may correctly be said, as of the motion picture, that its essential factors are religion, high society, humour, action, and sex, or a combination of some of these; and the flash of a bright scenario writer, that he could express all these elements in a single sentence: "My God," laughed the

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Duchess, "take your hand off my leg," while a criticism primarily of Hollywood practices and standards is a criticism by indirection of kindred selling publicity. The advertising man, indeed, is a good deal like him whose fate Bernard Shaw described a good many years ago, when he said that one who saw life as it was and thought about it romantically was doomed to despair; the advertising man, for all his charts and graphs, is an incorrigible romantic. If he were not so committed to romanticizing cosmetics and clothes, he would be more dependable.

To assert, however, that the romanticized outgivings of the advertising man have depraved the taste or coarsened the sensibilities of a public subjected for years to the impact of the daily press and the motion picture is a bit thin. There may have been some deterioration of the public, owing to the sex motif in advertising, but it is of such low visibility as hardly to justify the tears and toil of the uplifter. A philosopher once observed that we should not be too meticulous about a very small illegitimate child, and the illegitimate effect of this motif seems very small. The extension of the technique to commodities clearly not sexual in their nature was intended, not to gratify or stimulate the impulses of the prurient, but to sell goods; and as a people we pay honour to the man who can sell the most goods. We may not have the courage to look matters squarely in the face in the situation which Miss Lowell put before us, but we have the courage at least to look our commercialism and industrialism squarely in the face. And when sex is broadcast in fiction, the theatre, fashion, verse, diet, sport, what not, why bar the advertising man from its domain?

Overt instances of impropriety or actual obscenity cannot be expected to escape the vigilance of prosecutors or Watch and Ward societies. We have our guardians, praise be; and although Thomas Jefferson, who said he read only one newspaper, and that rather for its advertisements than for its news, believing—as he declared in another letter—

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that "advertisements contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper," might alter his policy and amend his dicta were he alive today, we can still venture to hope that the republic he helped found is not going straight-way to the dogs on account of its advertising. Neither the very young nor the very elderly, the groups for which the fewest vices are available, are entirely lost. What has been lost is a certain degree of respect for firms long believed to be entirely respectable, and a certain degree of confidence in the level-headedness of some successful advertising agencies.

As the shouting and the tumult dies, then, as the more seductive of the maidens trip off the pages and the flirt with the aching heart turns her tear-stained face away, the ladies, bless 'em, will quit sniffing around for B. O. and halitosis, sleuthing to see whether their rivals have more radiant complexions or more subtle femininity, and agonizing over the superior appearance of the Joneses' car; and the long-suffering male will feel that he can smoke what he likes, wear "sloppy socks" and even venture forth of an evening without a dinner jacket. The Land of the Free has not yet been hopelessly imbrued with smut nor saturated with sex.

Chapter Thirteen

THE PRESENTATIVE ARTS

by MAX F. MEYER

W HATEVER is done well, is done "with art." If after the doing a solid thing remains to which the senses may apply themselves although the artist has ceased his performance, that thing is "an object of art," provided it is not a waste product like the dust scattered by a dancer, but a product representing the performance. Some arts, for instance, that of dancing, do not leave such an object behind, or rather, do not always, for the modern motion picture can preserve even the art of dancing. All such definitions of special divisions of art have, therefore, only a relative value. Even "well" done is a relative concept, depending on time, location and historical circumstances. It is the doing that counts. There is no art unless there is a doer, an artist.

The doer's doing can be understood only biologically. Usually the doer is a human being. But who would exclude animals lower than the human race from being considered artists?

The artist is popularly regarded as an "emotional" being and contrasted with the engineer, who is regarded as an "intellectual" being. The distinction again is purely relative. It is antiquated. Modern psychology is beginning to

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throw overboard the distinction between the emotions and other phases of mental life. All that is scientifically acceptable is a relative distinction between the immediate and the less immediate usefulness of reaction. We mean by reaction the sensory-neural-motor activity of a living being on different occasions. If it is only quite remotely useful for the preservation of life, it is "emotion."

There is no absolute distinction, biologically, if I "run for my life" on a dangerous race track because I believe that my family needs the money payable to the winner, or if I "run for my life" because some Indians are behind me with arrows or some gangsters with machine guns. You call the former running intellectual if you know that I have been able to compute (intellectually) my chances in advance. You call the latter emotional if you know that some time before the event I uttered (emotionally) the remark that I was afraid of my pursuers. Your knowing thus or so makes a great difference. With the advent of psychoanalysis we have, however, renounced the idea that anybody could know all the motives of anybody. But he can guess. Psychoanalysis is guessing the motive; and the guess is not always totally wrong. But the sharp distinction between the intellectual and the emotional vanishes.

That the doings of an artist are only very indirectly useful for life is hardly debatable. Painters and poets proverbially live in garrets. A Mæcenas is a historically well-established kind of charitable institution. A Schubert sells a song for a gulden. Prose writers teach freshman English in colleges. Actors have no banker accompanying them on the road. Exceptions only prove the rule, for the newspapers tell us that there are far more posers in Hollywood living from hand to mouth than there are persons receiving fabulous salaries. If an artist pays an income tax on earned income, the probability is that his income is earned by a vocation and that his art is his avocation.

An avocation is a vocation which is "off" the travelled

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road. Most people are "called" to make a living and therefore have a calling; but the artist is called *off* to serve the muses. To some extent we all serve the muses, although most of us but little. Biologically this means that the animal body, having a sensory-neural-motor organization, by law of nature inevitably responds to sensory stimulation no matter whether the response serves to prolong his life or is wasted, or—worse—shortens his life. Adaptation, when needed, can be had only with slowness. How can a mechanism—and we are mechanisms—avoid reacting when bad luck has denied him in his past the chance of getting adapted with sufficient slowness to the noxious stimulations? He cannot. I read in the paper that the tenth boy has just been drowned this summer in the Meramec River near St. Louis. And yet, is not the swimming reaction to the sight of water a wonderfully life-protecting practice? But to be adaptive, it must not be impulsive, but slow, gradual. How can a mechanism like a human being always distinguish ——!

Fortunately life goes only for exceptional individuals so extremely in the catabolic direction. *Most of our reactions* to stimuli are only *wasted*, without killing us. And a few of our reactions even prolong our life—that goes without saying. So it is not really miraculous that many of us live to be three score and ten.

When we look on the innumerable wasted reactions of an average human being, a few of them are striking to the observer, no matter by what accident of being either rare, or big, or just adapted to the observer's momentary mood. They become conspicuous while the others are like a sea of sand, a desert, in which the conspicuous ones appear as oases. To the conspicuous reactions alone, of course, do we give names. We call these wasted reactions sport, frolic, pastime, pleasantry, prank, diversion, game, play, recreation, avocation, artistic creation, artistic reception, æsthetic enjoyment—of course on occasion also anger,

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fright, choler, indignation, temper, passion, rage, fury, and so forth. But it is the former, the sensory-neural-motor reactions of waste which are designated as pleasant, that concern us here. There is little in the latter that is constructive. And it is not the usage of language to refer to actions which leave destruction behind as "arts."

Some of these "pleasantly wasteful" (in the sense above explained) or "artistic" or "æsthetic" occupations of human beings living in a society are by consensus of (existing) opinion called "representative arts." We generalize but slightly if we go a step further and call them "presentative arts." That consensus is reason enough for discussing now more exclusively the presentative arts. To the question, to whom or to what these arts present anything, it is a sufficient answer to say that they present to the eyes of human beings that which is left when the artist is through with his work. We do not have the time to quarrel with any one of those who assert that sculptures are meant to appeal to the sense of touch. There must be a limit to every kind of discussion.

Any arts which not only present, but frequently even represent objects to human eyes, obviously copy wholes or parts (and compose out of copied parts) taken from the world in which we live and which would present to the eyes of mankind its parts anyway, although perhaps quite differently grouped. The artist—that artist who concerns us here—copies the visible world; and, being an artist, he does it playfully, wastefully, rather than in the business-like manner of the medicine man who forms a picture of somebody's enemy, pierces the picture's heart and then collects his fee from him who gave the order that So-and-so die from a heart disease. The medicine man's "representation" is a business, because he does it for his "bread-and-butter" and not wastefully, playfully. The frequent overlapping of business and art need not ever worry us. We

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know that the distinction between use and waste in biology is a relative one.

Tracing the presentative arts prehistorically, we convince ourselves that geographical conditions determine largely the material used by the artist to play with. At the same time, of course, the greater or lesser need for durability when exposed to the ravages of time or when exposed to the difficulties and risks of transportation must have influenced the choice of material. When in western Asia a merchant sent his invoice to a merchant in another town in the form of a brick, that is, after writing it on a block of clay and having it baked, safety against forgery must have outweighed the consideration of higher postage because of the weight in ounces. In Central America we find people who live in marshy regions making manikins for worship or for children's play by weaving them out of rushes. In other regions the baking of clay is easily possible and for this and other reasons baked clay is the favoured material for sculpture. Where there are plenty of rocks but no tools hard enough to chisel them into form or even to scratch lines into them, but materials for inks and paints are available, business communications (of tribes, for example, wandering in successive sections) may be painted on the rocks. And purely playful activities will then also leave their monuments painted on rocks. There is no need for philosophizing on such questions as the æsthetic preference for sculpture as compared with painting. Tradition, that is, social habituation overwhelming individual habituation, is a large factor in determining such preference. To the mere sense of sight there is no fundamental æsthetic factor differentiating the presentative arts into those that draw within two of Euclid's dimensions and those that chisel over all three.

We do not altogether deny, of course, that there are differences of style between sculpture and painting. But, as the sculptor, Adolf Hildebrand, so clearly set forth

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more than forty years ago, the style differences are slight. They result from the uniformity of illumination of the painter's surface, and the shadowiness of the sculptor's material work, more than from the undeniable fact that a painting more rapidly than even a relief, and much more rapidly than sculpture in the round, loses all the meaning which the artist gave it, as soon as we insist on walking around it. Even sculpture has a front surface. *Walking around* a piece on exhibition is always *a barbarism*. A piece of merchandise which stands on a twirling turnstile in a show window belongs neither to painting nor to sculpture, but to the dance, therefore, does not contradict the last assertion.

Of course, there is no restriction to the contents of the tale which the presentative language of the sculptor-painter speaks to us. Even Lessing's famous treatise, *Laokoön*, does not assert that words speak exclusively in terms of time, and pictures exclusively in terms of space, but only that space is far more directly suggested in pictures and time far more directly in words. If that were otherwise, how could one illustrate a novel or set up in printer's type a book on geography? The contents of the presentative arts include all creation, all its evolution, all its life and death. However, since the artist is a being of the species man, one may apply to him the once famous, now trite, remark that the proper study of mankind is man. In the preservative as in the playful activities of mankind, *no objects can take more important parts*, when the rôles are being distributed, *than men, women, and children*. The landscape, important in the art of man as it is in his history, is humanly interesting only because of its aspects inviting human beings to live there, or—the negative side of the same datum—because of its forbidding aspects, as illustrated in a glacier, a rock, a whirlpool, an ocean wave.

The artist, thus, cannot help being as strongly moved in his art as in his utilitarian life by the fact that the whole

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living world is mixed with the concepts of the male and the female. He cannot restrict his contents of representation to geography *uninhabited*, nor to plan life where the sex difference is easily hidden, nor to picturing mere children where the sex differentiation may easily be forgotten. The mature human being whom he depicts is by necessity either *a man or a woman*, never a neuter.

Do not misconstrue this condition, however, by nourishing the notion that the perfection of his art can be enhanced by the fact, or by his consciousness of the fact, that every human being he represents has sex, is either male or female biologically, reproductively. The perfection of his art consists only in the clarity with which his creations present themselves to the eye, but not in the application of any rule by which he selects his contents, or, as some prefer to say, his "subjects." The possible *contents* of his art are the whole world. The clarity of presentation is a matter of *form*, that is, visible form. To preach a sermon is not the business of this artist. His art is directly concerned with *spatial form*, not with either its material content or with any thereby suggested spiritual content. Such contents concern him only secondarily. We owe gratitude to Adolf Hildebrand that he valiantly fought metaphysical æsthetics and, before anyone else, made clear that the problem of the sculptor-painter is a problem of form. *The greatest artist is he who attains the greatest intelligibility of form.*

One must not rashly conclude that, if all the aforesaid is accepted, sex can play a rôle in the artist's professional life only to the small extent to which the sculptor-painter may be, should be, convinced of a greater perfection possible in representing either the male *form* or the female *form*. As he has the choice of his contents, he will serve his own art and prefer the representation of the one sex to that of the other in accordance with that conviction. But one must not forget two other factors. The artist cannot help being a man or a woman, and, for that good and

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sufficient reason, may prefer to represent what he chooses to present to himself, that is, the sex with which he prefers to mingle socially when free from working for bread-and-butter, when at leisure. And a further factor is this, that the artist, no matter how much he may be wrapped up in his "art for art's sake," is a social human being and as such is longing for appreciation of his art by other human beings. These other human beings, male or female or more frequently both, on whose appreciation the artist counts for his life's satisfaction, may more readily appreciate the artist's work if he chooses for contents of his art, that is, as subjects for representation, the general story of sex in any or all of its possible ramifications, rather than visible matter essentially divorced from sex.

Thus we have to consider three questions: (1) Is one sex more presentable in art, that is, in *visual perception*, than the other sex? (2) Has the artist a *personal preference* for presenting one of the two sexes? (3) Is the artist surer of *social recognition* if he chooses preferably the story of sex for presentation?

It is perfectly clear (except now and then to a cubist to whom his simplicity of an abstraction is sacred even when the abstraction itself, universally, is meaningless to the beholder) that the spatial forms to be represented have to be chosen with great care, with a particular psychological insight, before the technical skill of the artist is applied to them. Our first question, therefore, is restated: *Is the male or the female form more capable of being visually presented to us by nature or represented by the artist's technical skill?*

The psychological laws of space perception by sight have to be consulted in order to answer this question. This is not the place to enter into a detailed description of the psychological laws of configuration. Suffice it to say that "unity in variety" (or "integration," as modern neurological psychology expresses it in a single term) is the fundamental

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principle. No form can be perceived with perfection of the perceptive functioning unless it is subdivided into various forms, so that the complexity of our inherited nervous organization has a chance to come into vigorous play. And not with perfection either unless the subdivisions give our nervous organization a chance to do what it is built for, that is, to integrate them, to unify. The principle is at least as old as Aristotle, but when its application to representative art was lost in the earlier Middle Ages, in the Byzantine stage of art, it took about five hundred years to recover it in practice, as with Cimabue and Giotto, toward the end of the Middle Ages, and five hundred years more to recover it in theory, too, as with Hogarth and Adolf Hildebrand.

Our question in a nutshell is this: Does the male or the female form of the human body offer more chances for the application of the principle of unity in variety? At once the question becomes complicated by the fact that in civilized society the human body rarely becomes visible except when clothed. And of course, as the human body is usually presented, so it will usually be represented.

In all ages beyond the most primitive civilizations the clothing of women has been designed more elaborately than that of men. It is not at all our business to assign—as if we were “criminal” judges—the responsibility for this fact to either sex as defendant, but merely to state the fact. That this fact made it easier for the artist to apply the principle of “unity in variety” to the female than to the male is obvious. Look at Jan van Eyck’s “Arnolfini and his Wife” and answer whether the left or the right half of the picture was easier to execute. The artist did not have to throw a pair of slippers before the woman’s feet!

Just because the clothing greatly facilitates the artist’s task of representing the (clothed) human form either in sculpture or in painting, it must inevitably occur to an artist ambitious to prove to himself the height of his talents,

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that he should solve the more difficult problem of representing the human form in the nude. Then the question which we have raised recurs in another terminology: Is the human animal in its natural state more beautiful when male or when female?

There is no denying that the female form more readily subdivides itself to the eye than does the male form. The male trunk, on the average, is little more than a barrel, whereas the female trunk divides itself at the waist into two halves. And the upper half is laterally subdivided by the female's equipment for nourishing her offspring. As a substitute for these advantages of which the male is deprived, the latter has only one possibility left, that of developing his muscles into those of a prize-winning athlete. Then indeed one can speak of male beauty of form, but it certainly is not a typical beauty, since to the average man such muscular development is denied.

Even with respect to the shape of the arms and legs the female of the species man is somewhat favoured. The knees and elbows and ankles and wrists in both sexes are dividing points not only because of the angles easily formed in the joints, made for that purpose by nature, but also because there are no muscles at the joints. Neither does fat readily accumulate at the joints. So the muscles, in the male, have a chance to model the lengths cut off by the joints. But muscular development has great limitations. The female, although being less muscular, by the greater tendency to deposit fat under the skin has a much better chance than the male to develop the modelling of the extremities. If the male begins to deposit fat, he does it where it produces with respect to form just the opposite effect. The male's deposit of adipose tissue occurs, when it occurs, most exuberantly at his waist, totally eliminating the already inconspicuous waist line and transforming his trunk into a shapeless, bloated mushroom.

Our second question was this: *Is the artist likely to have*

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a personal preference for representing one of the sexes rather than the other? Why and why not? The answer is by necessity both very simple and very complex. It is very simple when the answer is to be abstract, one of general validity, that is, stating a universal law of psychology. The artist's art at all moments of his life will mirror, must mirror, his temporary desires. If he wastes, as we all do, the greater part of life's sensory-neural-motor activity, and if his wasteful actions tend to be sculptural and pictorial, as they do not tend with all of us, his desires on occasions will normally aim at the other sex.

But the simple answer just given is no satisfactory answer at all. And the real answer is very complex. Suppose he were at that moment "in love," in the plainest sense of the word, that is, overwhelmed by heterosexual love—he would paint the other sex preferably, if he were free and at leisure. But suppose he were either a narcissist or homosexually captured—he would paint his own sex. Again suppose he were, like Rembrandt, in love with an artistic theory which could be readily realized only by studying possible models in the ghetto or in other queer places and by torch or candle light, the other sex would play so small a rôle in his subjects, that on the average the rôle might, although mistakenly, be regarded as negative. Or suppose he were in love with money, or with social rank, and could secure such advantages easily by placing his artistic talents for sale, his choice of subjects would merely mirror the choice of those "employers" to whom he would sell his artistic skill. The answer, the more we think of it, becomes then tremendously complex, becomes identical with a complete history of all the sculpture and painting of the world. The simple notion that heterosexual impulse is "the" motive of the life of all creatures at all times while life lasts, is believed only by some disciples of Freud, but apparently not even by their master. The number of motives for human action is endless.

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The third question we put was this: *Is the story of sex as the content of art more likely to secure for the artist social recognition, than any other story of human life or of world existence?* By such stories we mean migration, war, scientific pursuits, education, religion, agriculture, industry, athletic contests, bullfights, commerce, seafaring, tidal waves, earthquakes, mountain slides, etc. There is little doubt that fifty per cent of the contents of the totality of any artist's creation in any field of art may easily be suggestive of that great variety of human relations which constitute our conception of "the family" in the broadest (good as well as evil) sense of this "biosocial" term without in the least endangering the artist's reputation of being only normally and properly interested in sex.

Compare literature. How much of the contents of the prose literature which we call "the novel" consists of such events as wooing and winning the other sex, sexual self-abandonment, betrayal of sexually established obligations, crimes committed under the intoxication of sexual passion, prostitution in its raw and more refined forms, exploitation of prostitutes, heroic self-sacrifice for husband, for wife, or for offspring, unfortunate sexual aberrations like homosexuality, and other dramatic events, comedies and tragedies, that would be unheard of, unthinkable, if mankind propagated itself asexually, as do numerous lower species of plants and animals? Who would call it an exaggeration, if we say, merely guessing, that at least eighty per cent of all the printed lines of novelistic literature would pass out of existence if nothing directly or indirectly relating to sex were permitted to exist, if neither the pronoun "he" nor the pronoun "she" existed, but only the neutral "it." As we theorize, saying that the problem of the sculptor and painter is a problem of form, we emphasize the necessity in practice of a content which is attractive or repulsive, which is of interest to human beings through the story

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told, for without a content there is no need of form. Content is that which fills space, lives in space—not space itself in the abstract, not abstract magnitudes of volumes, surfaces, and lengths. But the content of his works does not classify the artist as a star in his profession of such and such magnitude. The grandeur of his formal, spatial treatment of the content does.

The sculptor-painter who has mastered the problem of form has the social obligation of placing his mastery at the service of society. If he dedicated his mastery to the execution of subjects in art for which there is no demand, he would be a social parasite, unless he had the conviction that such a demand would arise in the future, even after his death. A man of that calibre we admire for his courage, his conviction, his heroism. But we cannot, on the other hand, condemn him who, not knowing what society's demands will be in the future, offers what is acceptable, accepted, now. Not all human beings can be heroes.

We have to be generous, therefore, in interpreting an artist's motives when we see that he is an easy-going social success: we should not condemn him for not being a hero. If we see that his choice of subjects helps him to success, how do we know that in different subjects, less in demand, he would not be equally successful as "a master of form"? Do we have any ethical right to demand (though we may, of course, wish and pray) that he undertake to apply the problem of form to subjects in which he might run the risk of being a social failure?

I should like to apply these arguments defensively to the criticism which accuses this or that artist of unduly, "merely for money's sake," emphasizing the sexual aspect of the possible subject matter of his art; that is, I want to defend the artist. And I also wish to apply the same arguments (since they can be thus applied) in defence of that part of the public which, interested in art for art's sake, overlooks quite naturally, almost unconsciously ac-

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cepts as inevitable, sexual aspects of the contents depicted which appear glaringly conspicuous to him whose interest in art is minimal—and against whom I wish to apply the same arguments offensively.

Let us first briefly treat the second, the offensive proposition. It happened not many years ago that the building commission of an American state house placed a fountain in the park before the building, and placed in the pool surrounding the fountain several centaurs and several naked "gamins," as the commission called them, playing with fishes. A society of women from a remote part of the state, visiting the capital city, saw the nudity of the bathing bronzes, was horror-struck and petitioned the commission to put clothing (modern bathing suits?) on the bronze children. Should we condemn the intentions of these women? No! They were well meaning.

The general question of "what is obscene" touches us here. Nudity may be obscene; but it is so only if it is a public and obvious suggestion of coitus or when the nudity appears as an early phase of a continuous and unitary event of which almost inevitably a later phase is coitus. Under such conditions a picture of human nudity is unduly excitatory. Apply this criterion to the fountain above mentioned. When boys play in the cold water of a pool, that is the whole event, and not an early phase of something larger and continuous; nothing follows, therefore, there is no obscenity.

A frequently applicable criterion of this test as to whether the same event has a later phase which without doubt must be condemned is the following. No picture or statue is obscene when it contains a human being that is nude partially or even wholly, but it is obscene when the man, or woman, is denuding himself, herself, even though still covered with a mass of clothing. There are exceptions to every rule, and so to this. But it is a good guide in many doubtful cases. The newspapers reported

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recently that on a certain widely known beach some bathers of mixed sex had been fined, not because they wore the most modern bathing suits which expose almost the whole skin to the sun, but because, in order to expose a few square inches more while sitting on the beach, they had just removed, virtually *were removing*, their thin shoulder straps.

Were the police justified in objecting? The objection was not based on the psychologically absurd argument that a few square inches of skin made the difference between decency and obscenity, but on the psychologically sound argument that, since the garments were designed to be worn with shoulder straps, he who was removing the shoulder straps was suggesting to the unavoidably present public that he was denuding himself. That "proceeding" makes it difficult for the beholder to free himself from the undesirable suggestion: "And what is *the next phase* of this procedure? What will be his next move?"

When it is so difficult to interpret ethically the motives of beholders or actors or artists or the police, should not critics of art be cautious in interpreting the motives of the authors of works of sculpture and painting, cautious in estimating the chasteness of this or that work in the nude? A certain pose of the subject presented may be unchaste to the critic only because in consequence of a sufficient biological education he reads into the pose a false succession of the later phases of the event. Good examples showing why caution in interpretation should be a maxim of every critic, are a Grecian Ariadne, the Venus of Milo, the Venus of Medici, the "Maja Desnuda" of Goya, Titian's "Venus of Urbino," the "Three Graces" of Rubens, to which we might add an undeniably religious piece, the "Annunciation" on a tapestry of the Rheims Cathedral, and could add dozens of others.

Of Titian's Venus it has been said, that "everyone sees in the Venus the left hand," which in the opinion of "every-

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one" is where it ought not to be. Mark Twain speaks out and calls it "exhibitionism."

We ought to ask these critics, how *they* would place this particular woman's hand and justify the location in bio-social terminology. We must ask an interpretative question: What is the woman doing here, and what position of the hand is then most naturally resulting from the application of the law of "least energy spent"? I can see in the Venus of Urbino nothing but a woman resting and cooling herself on a hot afternoon in the privacy of her home. In spite of resting stretched out on a couch, she is keeping the relatively alert attitude to be expected of an intelligent being by using her right hand to push her shoulders and thus her head into a semi-erect position. The left hand of this resting woman is totally unoccupied. Is that an artistic fault? Should the artist have made the left hand of this resting woman reach up and hang something on a peg on the wall behind her?

A human being's hand, when otherwise unoccupied, can be biologically understood only by letting it seek a protective position. Either it protects by biological instinct the part of the body that needs it relatively most, by shielding it, or—this also is a form of biological protection—it assumes a pose which saves the body as a whole any avoidable muscle strain.

What could be more natural than shielding such structures as the vulva or the nipples. The eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, while also delicate, cannot be shielded because they must be kept available for seeing, hearing, breathing, speaking. The position over the vulva is certainly the most natural use of the otherwise unused hand. Further—and this is at least as important—in scarcely any other position could the left arm be so free from muscular strain, thus saving the whole organism a maximum of unnecessarily spent muscular work. Should the artist have falsified biological nature in order to please the social prejudices of

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those whose biological understanding of human nature is insufficient? Make an experiment. Watch a row of people seated in chairs and otherwise unoccupied and undirected, just waiting for something, for example, for their photographer to take a group picture or for the curtain to rise in the opera. You will see that half of them instinctively keep one or both hands in the lap. Is that exhibitionism? Would a fig leaf blown on the vulva by a discerning god of the winds have been exhibitionism on the part of Titian?

The Grecian Ariadne carries her clothing in one hand and places the other hand, here again totally unoccupied, in the same position as Titian's Venus does, except that the fingers, in the standing position of the woman, cannot help hanging parallel to the body axis, whereas in Titian's painting they hang naturally over the roundness of the belly. Such a straightening of the fingers, if it existed in the Venus who is lying on a couch, would mean unnecessary muscle strain, would be a falsification of biological nature.

The Venus of Medici, having both hands unoccupied while she is gazing forward in a natural way, instinctively assumes with her hands an attitude of readiness to protect her vulva and her nipples. She has been called "unchaste" in comparison with the Venus of Milo, who has been labelled "chaste." But the idea that the Medici Venus is "pointing" at her reproductive organs is an absurdity possible only to one who in addition to being biologically ignorant is totally incapable of thinking in three dimensions.

I interpret the Venus of Milo, whose arms are missing, as a woman who is denuding herself to take a bath, and is letting down her garment with great care to form on the ground a small and neat circle from which her feet may then easily escape. The principle that "denuding the self" is less chaste than "being nude" is excluded here by the exquisite care with which she is handling the garment, a

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care not readily compatible with sexual passion, which would throw the garment to the winds.

These sculptures, looked upon with more or less suspicion by some, to an educated and normal beholder are no more suggestive of sexual passion, of coitus, than a picture of any woman wrapped up in furs and being guided by a male companion through a snowstorm toward a house, the illuminated windows of which are seen in the distance. It is strange to observe the extremes of degeneration into which human thinking may be miseducated, as exemplified by objections to the nude in the representative arts on general principles.

Compare with these nudes, each of whom is clearly occupied with an attitude unrelated to sex function, the following pornograph which may be found on the wall of many a living or reception room in "female seminaries" of the prudist type. A girl is shown in a pose which is impossible in any of the ordinary activities of life, the whole body being curved backwards with the pelvis thrown forward. There are two or three typical poses of which the female of the species "*homo sapiens*" when in heat and progressing in actual coitus close to the climax of this function reflexly assumes one—is forced to assume one by her biological, that is, sensory-neural-muscular mechanism whether at that moment she wants to or not. The picture is a clear sample of one of these strained attitudes of the body. To make the subject still clearer, the artist surrounds the girl by little angels called "erotes" by the Greeks, who, smiling and joyous, are furiously driving her. And to remove the last remnant of doubt, the picture is named Spring, the season of fertility.

How did the modern artist succeed in introducing this pornograph into the temples of chastity? By three clever tricks, which deceive the ignorant having the police duty. By leaving the male partner totally to the imagination, merely symbolizing him by the erotes, of whom the artist

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may make the pretence that they represent childhood, "the age of innocence." By surrounding the girl with sufficient, though flimsy, clothing so that no jury could pronounce her strictly a nude, although the erotes are denuding her. And by turning her body from the horizontal ninety degrees upwards so that the pretence may be made that the girl is running on her feet. But in vain do we seek an answer to the legitimate question: "For what purpose does a girl ever fly forward among trees in such an unbalanced pose?" It would be difficult to find anything so puzzling—if free from sex—among the classical sculptured nudes.

Goya's "Majas," one nude, one clothed, the same model, the same pose, are a splendid object lesson for the study of the comparative excitatory power of the clothed and the nude body. The nude, like Titian's "Venus of Urbino," is clearly occupied with resting, cooling herself. There is no more sex excitation in that attitude than there is in any girl in a modern bathing suit, almost naked, on the beach. But place the same girl with the same costume in a park, where that is not expected; and the beholder of the clothed Maja (not of the nude) will easily become conscious of the question: "What is she going to take off next, and what is the end?" The "Maja Desnuda" simply "is naked," and that is all, but the "Maja Vestida" suggests "being easily stripped," or, as a modern writer (Thomas Craven) expresses it, "even more seductive in her thin, skin-tight breeches."

The nudes of Rubens are examples of art wherein the popularity of the subject is totally neglected by the artist. His "Three Graces," for instance, have none of the prettiness of youth. They are bulgingly fleshy as one expects healthy women to be at the age of forty. Such women are more decorative when fashionably dressed than when dressed only in their own skin. Only a rich artist can afford subjects which nobody buys for decorative purposes. Rubens was among the painters what Goethe was among

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the poets: by profession a statesman and not an artist. Since the painter was on almost equal terms with the nobility, his works could command high prices; and being productive, he could accumulate wealth. Rubens was so wealthy that queens borrowed money from him. So, whenever he chose, he could apply his genius to representing the human form for the benefit of those only who do not buy exclusive ownership but are more than willing to visit museums to see what is possible in art. He surely did not have the intention, but one could ascribe to him the intention to prove that the sight of nudity may be (not necessarily is) totally free from exciting sex desires in spite of the artistic perfection of the representation and the perfect health of the models.

Let us add a few words about the nude in religious art. Both Adam and Eve, on separate panels in "The Adoration of the Lamb" by the van Eycks, are splendid examples in art of the biological fact, well observed by the painters, that during lack of busy occupation the ease from muscular strain and the protective demand combine to bring it about that man or woman would be most likely to hold one hand over the angle of the legs and the other hand at an elevation a trifle higher than the elbow and in front of the breast. In the tapestry already mentioned (published by Emile Male in *L'Art Religieux*, Paris, 1925, p. 239) we see Eve in the same pose as that of the Medici Venus. If the artist asked any model to stand or move "at ease," not to stand soldier-like "at attention," the pose could not be otherwise. It is natural. Is biological truthfulness, even in a religious picture, not far preferable to superstitious rationalization in questions of morals?

The combined art of the sculptor and painter is sometimes broadened to include that of the architect. It should always be broadened thus, even though it is then difficult to find a name for the whole, since architecture is scarcely representative, and the name formative or presentative art

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is not well established in the usage of language. The architect essentially is an engineer, of course. He has to provide shelter for people to dwell in and under. But the beauty of the architect's work, separated from its usefulness, is visual beauty, of visual form, just like that of sculpture and painting. The same laws govern all three arts.

The form of architecture, if it is to be beautiful, must be characterized by ease of perception in the two dimensions of the field of vision and suggestive of the third dimension by visible features having such a suggestive force. Thus the dome or one or several spires of a building justify themselves by telling us what is under them although this is hidden to the eye. Thus the colonnades of the Romanesque architecture justify themselves through suggesting to us the roominess of the building by letting us look directly into the frontal layer of the building. The same rules apply to landscape architecture. But what has all this to do with sex?

In our modern civilization where the sexes mingle in public life with equal freedom, architecture has little chance to be influenced by sex. But going back to times and countries where the two sexes are kept rather strictly separate by law, sex has a chance to influence even architecture. Study the Alhambra buildings and the surrounding landscape for this purpose. There are the magnificent and spacious halls where the public life of the male sex took place. There are the smaller gardens and the cottage-like and pretty rather than magnificent buildings where the women lived almost the whole of their lives, and where the family life of both sexes and their children could run its course. All that is interesting; but it is wholly a thing of the past. The modern apartment does not indicate whether the occupant is a male bachelor or a female bachelor or a family with a few—if any—children.

Chapter Fourteen

MODERN PAINTING

by C. J. BULLIET

Sex, in a blatant bold expression through the female nude, runs riot in contemporary painting, with wilder abandon than in any other period of European and allied history.

The day of the coquettish fan, the flirtatious eye, the arched slipper, the flipped-up skirt is in abeyance. When the present-day painter wishes to be heard on the all-important topic of sex, his expression is through the female body stripped bare. Women painters as well as men have their say in this symbolism. It is a day of the heroine in paint as well as in the novel—the nude hero belongs to the age of the Greek sculptors and of Homer.

This doesn't mean, necessarily, that we are living in the wickedest of epochs. It means rather that our artists, like our novelists, our dramatists, our philosophers even, have grown hysterically sex conscious and are seeking to express themselves in the strongest language they know—blurting and screaming out their messages in terms of the nude female body.

What with our Freuds and our Jungs and our Havelock Ellises, what with the new freedom of women in business and more particularly in the speedy motor car, what with

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the cruel disillusionments of the least romantic war the world ever saw, we are revolting against a Puritanism so aged that its seeds were planted and it flourished and grew to a ripe maturity long before it found a suitable name.

This Puritanism—this morbid fear of sex—had its origin, so far as it affects us, in the teachings of the gloomy, energetic, twist-backed St. Paul, who became a morbid misogynist after being rejected by a rabbi's daughter, and proceeded to inject into a series of epistles the purple poison. Intensification came in the midnight of Europe's mediævalism, morbidly interested in the birth of St. Paul's Christ from a Virgin, brooding darkly over the problem, seeking a solution that would satisfy natural philosophers along with the religious mystics.

The beginning of the end of this brooding came with the advent of Voltaire—but it took art another hundred years to dare on canvas what Voltaire and the Encyclopædists dared in print.

The French painter, Edouard Manet, may be credited with making the break that developed into the present wild orgy of the nude. The date was 1865, the place the official Salon of Paris, and the means the cataclysmic "Olympia," now in the Louvre, saved seven decades ago from the knives, the tarred fingers and the spittle of angry fanatics, who milled and howled in front of her, clubbed away by the police.

Nudity, in 1865, was not new in painting. It had existed in Europe from the time of the Greek Apelles, centuries before the birth of fanatical Saul of Tarsus. But the Venus that Apelles invoked from the waves, even though the model for her was the courtesan Phryne (and so popularly recognized, to the extent that Phryne herself shared for a time the honours heaped upon her painted image), was a Venus before whom men fell down and worshipped. The lightning of Zeus would have struck dead any male who viewed her with a longing for possession.

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The nude continued on this exalted plane when she was incorporated into the art of the Christians. Though the goddesses withered and died in the phosphoric glow of the halos of the new deities, the classic myths became as respectable as the Greek and Latin tongues, in whose literature they were embalmed.

The nude Venuses and the chaste Dianas persisted as revered relics of a rainbow past. A naked Eve timidly joined her pagan sisters, along with that Susanna the elders assailed washing herself in the garden.

But ecclesiastical eyes kept a sharp watch—the gentle Murillo was rebuked by the Inquisition for suggesting that the Madonna had toes.

As long, however, as the painters played the game according to strict rules based on classical and biblical lore, they were reasonably safe from molestation—though at the height of the inquisitorial frenzy in Spain, Velasquez, son-in-law of the grand inquisitor, dared do only one nude Venus, and her in secret. But what a Venus!

By strictly observing the rules, even the lusty Rubens (inspirer generations later of Cézanne and of the greatest of all painters of unclothed women, the divine Renoir) was able to get away with murder, to the joy of posterity. His highly improper nudes were properly labelled. Botticelli could paint the lovely body of Lorenzo's mistress, the exquisite Simonetta, and call her Venus—and then he could clothe her and without altering her face call her the Virgin. Raphael could convert his pretty, frail Fornarina, of whom he has left a semi-nude portrait, into the Sistine Madonna.

This custom of exhibiting nude women discreetly as classical or biblical heroines persisted even beyond the Napoleonic era, though with an additional device or two. The mistresses of French kings were not always content to be goddesses or nymphs or even Madonnas. "Bathers," they were called when they wanted to be just women, but

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even the bathers, however logically they could be naked in their tubs or in shaded pools, were idealized a bit and could be quickly renamed nymphs should any Comstock happen to pop up in the shape of a holy hermit with a savage tongue. As late as DuBarry, however, the king's nude mistress could be a goddess if she liked—she posed for Boucher as a Diana.

A Spaniard, Goya, working about the time Napoleon was fighting in the shadows of the pyramids, did the portrait nude of his noble mistress, the Duchess of Alba, and called it "La Maja Desnuda." The King of Spain got hold of it and hid it for a quarter of a century or so, so that it could not corrupt the morals of his young sons, ultimately ancestors, direct and collateral, of that pleasant European playboy of yesterday, Alfonso XIII.

"Maja" is perhaps the first of the powerful, uncamouflaged, utterly frank nudes. She hangs now in the Prado.

But the discreet action of the King of Spain in hiding her when new-born was characteristic of the attitude of all Europe.

The French, however, were discovering a new alibi. The Napoleonic wars had drawn attention to the Orient with its harems, and the houri began to intrigue the Europe that was intent a few centuries before on wiping out the Turk and all his wives and concubines. The "odalisque" became a creature to be tolerated in paint along with Venus, Eve, Susanna and the French bathers, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, in a frenzy of inspiration, proceeded to paint the mightiest "Odalisque" that ever was.

That was in 1814, and for the next fifty years the Paris Salon annually had scores and scores of little odalisques patterned with or without innumerable variations after Ingres'.

Manet for one among a multitude got weary of them. So he painted "Olympia" and hung her in the Salon of 1865. "Olympia" was no odalisque (even though her pose

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intentionally recalled the masterpiece of Ingres), nor was she an Eve or a Venus or a Bathsheba, or even a bather. She was just a red-headed Parisian prostitute, stretched out naked on her luxurious couch, gazing with brazen impudence into the eyes of all beholders.

Though artists stormed and moralists raved and fanatics spat at her and endeavoured to cut her to shreds, "Olympia" calmly gazed on. Like the Sphinx, perhaps, she felt herself a creature of destiny, but her riddle has proven easier to read. Hers was a graphic proclamation that the age of camouflage was at an end. Hereafter, painters could paint nudes and call them naked women, if they liked.

And they did like. Even the academicians, who denounced and detested Manet, took advantage of the license he forced. The mighty Bouguereau himself, czar of the Salon, found it possible to paint myriads of unclothed ladies without bothering to consult the dictionary for classic names and thus delay the boxing of them up and shipping them to America to adorn gilded saloons with mahogany bars.

By the end of the century, under this new art freedom (art, like the governments beholden to Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Revolution, had at last broken the shackles of ecclesiastical control), the world centring in the studios of Paris had become so overrun with nudes that young bold spirits became as fed-up with them as had been Manet with the eternal odalisques.

And so, when *fin de siècle* was accomplished and the century turned, the fiery French Fauves and Cubists were ready to call a halt.

Something of what they had in mind was proclaimed in "manifesto" form by the younger and more voluble Italian Futurists:

"The nude in painting is as nauseous as adultery in literature. There is nothing immoral in our eyes, it is the monotony of nudity that we fight against. Painters pos-

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sessed of the desire to display on canvas the bodies of the women with whom they are in love have transformed picture exhibitions into galleries of portraits of disreputables. We demand for the next ten years the absolute suppression of the nude in painting."

Though definitely propounded by the Futurists, the idea was "consensus" (the Dadaists a little later advocated "the clyster for Venus de Milo") and all the extreme Modernists proceeded to put it into effect.

The Futurists and the Cubists, working though they continued to do from nude models, so cut and slashed the poor girls to chunks and ribbons that "Nude Descending a Staircase" and "The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes" would have difficulty arousing the remotest eroticism in even a village deacon; while the Fauves proceeded to such violent distortions that their leader Matisse was grimly labelled a sadist by foes of the new movement. And they meant it.

For a time it looked as though sex was actually to be eliminated from Modernism, though the old Paris Salon and the British Academy and the American official exhibitions supplied nudes in even greater and greater abundance to counteract the radical propaganda.

But one of the mightiest masters of modern times was steadily at work, serenely oblivious of the extreme "isms" despite the fact he was rated as one of their fountain-heads, Auguste Renoir.

Renoir was creating nudes literally by the dozens, the scores, the hundreds. And they were nudes not afraid of sex, not ashamed of it.

Sensual though they are, Renoir's naked girls are the most innocent of all time, astonishingly free from offence even in quarters easily offended. The reason lies perhaps in the fact they have little intelligence—they are just gorgeous young female animals of the human species, look-

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ing out on the world with eyes as innocent as a young calf's.

But sex went into their making. "To paint a woman," said Renoir's artist friend Joyant, who had watched him at work, "excites him more than if he were caressing her."

However, it was a diffused sexuality—not the devotion of the elderly Rubens (Renoir's idol) for his girl wife and model, Helena Fourment, nor of Raphael for "La Fornarina," for whom he demanded quarters in Agostino Chigi's palace before he would do the murals there.

Renoir's models were his serving maids, particularly Gabrielle. "But I must admit I am not hard to please," he told Vollard. "I had just as lief paint the first old crock that comes along, just so long as she has a skin that takes the light."

Renoir's nudes, as impersonal as the Eves and Venuses of old times, yet as fresh and alert and "modern" as the best of the rebellious canvases of the Cubists, the Futurists and the Fauves, was sufficient answer to the manifesto, and the ten-year plan was suffered to dwindle silently into nothingness.

The master Fauve, Matisse, reverted even to the "Odalisque" of Ingres and gave so fresh a new expression to the old theme that his imitators threaten a new reign of the platitudinous such as will require another "Olympia" to break; while the master cubist, Picasso, already a master of the nude (with an Egyptian calm and sublimity) before Cubism, returned to it for tremendous monumental figures.

Both Matisse and Picasso, however, are Cézannish in spirit rather than Renoirish in their treatment of the nude—and oddly enough Cézanne is beholden as much as is Renoir to Rubens.

Rubens was the Hercules who strained the shackles that Manet finally broke. Lusty and full of masculine vigour, he created female nudes well beyond the limits of priestly propriety. But, rich and powerfully protected politically,

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he got away with them under biblical or mythological guise.

Renoir was enthralled by the sensuality of these big animal women of Rubens—he refined away much of the grossness and heightened the animal warmth.

Cézanne, afraid of women and instinctively disliking them, saw in the female figures of Rubens huge masses for the exercise of his genius for building solid forms, and so appropriated them. He had with him always a reproduction of the beefy nymphs in Rubens' "Landing of Marie de Medici," and these, far oftener than living models, were utilized by him.

Cézanne's nudes, in consequence, are sexless, and, as it is Cézanne rather than Renoir who has stamped the Modern movement, sex tends toward a low ebb among the more faithful of his disciples, of whom Matisse and Picasso are two.

Cézanne, in his search for solid and huge forms, turned also to the male, and his men—"bathers" and sometimes single individuals—are among the few masculine nudes in contemporary art. They rank with the athletes of the Greek sculptors (of the heavy wrestling type, not the fleet runners) and with certain of the men of Michelangelo who are free from the androgynous suggestion. It is possible that, had Rubens never flourished, Cézanne would have confined his art of the nude to male bodies. Rubens alone of the old masters points the way to the huge female Cézanne demanded.

However, Cézanne's men are no more obsessed with sex than are his women. It is the tonnage of their bodies and not the fire in their veins that interests him.

Few of Cézanne's disciples have followed him in his masculine phases. The most successful is Picasso, and while his nude men are more human than Cézanne's, they, like Picasso's women, are calm and frozen after the manner

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of the eternal, stolid Egyptians, his first gods among his beloved primitives.

Matisse, while reverting to the “Odalisque” of Ingres for subject matter, fails to get any more excited in her presence than Cézanne when confronted by the sportive nymphs of Rubens. Matisse’s “odalisques,” in consequence, are for the Occidental epicure rather than for the hot-blooded Turk.

The calm of Cézanne, however, is far from being universal among his avowed disciples and practically non-existent in the great majority of contemporary painters indulging in the orgy of the nude.

The German Expressionists, almost to a man, desert Cézanne, otherwise their master, in this phase, recognizing his superiority in the matter of form but retaining their own emotional impulses, which are kindred to those of their contemporary philosophers like Freud. Indeed, their whole art philosophy is a sort of pictorial psychoanalysis. They search the depths of their souls for whatever happens to be down there, draw it up and put it on canvas, whether it be jewels or black oil. The majority of the painters find in their souls what Freud found in his own, and while the symbolism is often obscure, the experienced in modern German philosophy can very often find a sex content—sometimes crude, cruel, violent, perverted.

The Germans, too, bolder even than the French, have undertaken to do what contemporary painters all over the world are doing as far as they individually dare—namely, convert the erotically obscene into something more or less universally acceptable.

The obscene has been in art since the beginning, as the “secret museums” of Europe and pictures and objects from the Orient and from Africa abundantly demonstrate. A vast bulk of this early “erotica” is of the utmost value to the anthropologist—most of it comes down from primitive times when its production was from impulse spontaneously

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honest and not consciously impure. The whole religious life of man at the earliest dawn of civilization has been reconstructed from "art objects" that no museum would dare exhibit publicly in "enlightened" communities.

This ancient "obscenity" has had abundance of additions as civilization progressed—largely, possibly, from such hands as use the walls of latrines as surfaces for their mural efforts, but also from painters like Lucas Cranach, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Annibale Carracci, Rembrandt, Adrian van Ostade, Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, Gillray, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Rowlandson, Beardsley, Jules Pas-cin, Felicin Rops, and the Japanese Hokusai.

(In literature, these graphic geniuses of smut have been matched by such men as Goethe, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Balzac, Coleridge, James Whitcomb Riley, Eugene Field, and Mark Twain. In Germany, the Holy Bible is cleaned up in the editions intended for children—much as we clean up *Gulliver* and the plays of Shakespeare—and Iwan Bloch, German philosopher-physician in his masterly *Sexual Life of Our Time*, warns gravely of the danger for children and immature persons in "the unexpurgated Bible and also illustrated comic papers.")

Much of this "pornography" by the painters of genius is, of course, of a high order. The best of Rowlandson, indeed, is under lock and key in portfolios.

In the revolt against Puritanism and the wild-fire spread of the nude, many artists have delved into the treasures of traditional obscenity, primitive and sophisticated, and have found motifs there for their work. A great bulk of "African Sculpture," for example, which has so powerfully influenced the Cubists, the Fauves, and the Expressionists, painters even more than sculptors, is to be classed with the primitive pornography—that honest obscenity at the base of certain religious rites still preserved in civilized lands in infinitely sublimated form. African sculpture,

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toned down, has resulted in some of the most daring nude poses of the Modernists.

The Germans have been the most persistent and successful delvers into the archives of by-gone obscenities, and the most daring utilizers of what they have found. Many of their pictures, quite openly displayed in Germany, would be regarded in this year of grace 1932 as no more fit for gallery walls in more squeamish countries than the extreme erotic things of Rops—frankly, blasphemously erotic and perhaps forever taboo.

But at least one of the German painters, George Grosz, has a satiric purpose so savage, so serious, and so intelligent that, in time, he may be permitted the courage of his X-rayed nudes. Grosz sees society as a vast panorama of female prostitutes and male satyrs. He lashes contemporary Germany as Goya did the Spain of his time—and Goya's "Caprichos," regarded in their days as highly objectionable morally, are now permitted, with a few exceptions, the use of the walls in the most respectable museums.

To Grosz sex is a monstrous thing, just as it was to St. Paul. But the German has broken through the Pauline-Puritanic taboos to tell what he knows. Sex is nothing to be ashamed of, as Christian philosophy believes, but something to be railed against savagely after the manner of Jeremiah in the unexpurgated King James version.

Contemporary with Cézanne and Renoir in the dawn of Modernism are Van Gogh and Gauguin. These are the four who have influenced practically all that is significant in painting since they flourished.

Van Gogh was both temperamentally and actually an evangelist, all aflame for the salvation of souls, and the more intense because he was a radical and an outcast from the respectable ministerial fold.

Though not obsessed with sex to the exclusion of all commandments except the seventh, as an evangelist might well be expected to be in the environment of Parisian

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studios, Van Gogh, when he did concentrate on love and its hectic problems brought to bear all the guns in his arsenal.

The "love of his life" happened to be a professional prostitute already the mother of illegitimate children and pregnant again when Van Gogh met and annexed her. With all the fervour of his religious soul he exalted her to the dignity of the Magdalene—conferring upon her, however, while still living with him "in mortal sin," the dignity the original Magdalene acquired only after bitter tears of repentance. Van Gogh continued to live with his frowzy saint until she got tired of him and deserted him for men more prosperous and less holy.

During their life together, Van Gogh painted and sketched her as a "lady of sorrows," nude, bowed down by the grief of the sins of her naked flesh. This emotion of the erring recurs in the few nudes he did later from other models—tense, powerful, depressing to look at. Van Gogh's intimate contact with women throughout his life was always with the prostitute, and always he saw her a down-trodden, sorrowful creature, victim of male lust and social callousness.

In cynical contrast may be noted Jules Pascin, who, like Van Gogh, finally put an end to his own life—bungling, too, like the Dutchman, the job of suicide. Van Gogh shot himself, missed the centre of vitality, and lingered. Pascin hanged himself with too much rope and had to exert extra strength to complete the work of strangulation.

To Pascin, too, all women were prostitutes—all, that is, that interested him. But they were put into the world to have a good time themselves and to help him have a good time. His studio swarmed with them—a few professionals, but mostly amateurs, including young women of social standing. Pascin scorned the professional model and was not partial to the complete nude. He preferred his women friends to sit about him, wearing a minimum of clothing

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and with filmy skirts and flimsy step-ins carelessly high and awry.

When one of his friends in this *négligé* luckily struck a pose he fancied, Pascin with quick and adroit pencil made the sketch that resulted ultimately in one of his airy, alluring pictures spread over the world.

For Pascin became one of the most popular and successful painters of his time, in contrast with the gloomy Van Gogh, whose far greater nudes hang sorrowful and destitute in great private collections, little known even in reproduction. As an interpreter of sex, Van Gogh was a couple of thousand years late—Pascin in the very current of his time, when even the physically virtuous ape the ways of the “scarlet woman.”

Van Gogh, while he has had numerous followers in his wild and rugged ways of doing landscapes, has left no disciples in his treatment of women.

Not so his contemporary, friend—and enemy, Gauguin.

Gauguin may be credited with (or accused of) introducing into contemporary art the tide of colour, still rapidly rising. People of pigmented skin had figured in painting in Europe long before Gauguin was born, but, until he introduced to Paris his Tahitians, coloured skin was largely the attribute of incidental personages, like the negro slave boy of Titian or the black servants in the harems of Ingres and Delacroix. Such a personage is the negress in “Olympia,” and she came in for her share of condemnation along with the brazen red-head—she and a black cat with arched back.

In the canvases of Gauguin, the tropically-burnt maidens of Tahiti assumed major importance. Theirs were souls to be reckoned with—proud souls, not cringing in obeisance in presence of the Caucasian. These nude creatures were made for love—a love that was not mere animal lust, even though a wilder sort of emotion than the maidens of France

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could inspire, and Gauguin had the superb skill to convey distinctively the jungle charm.

The enchantment of Gauguin's Tahitians sent other artists scurrying on the hunt, and somebody—it may have been Derain, it may have been Picasso, it may have been Vlaminck (all have been given the credit)—stumbled onto African sculpture.

These carvings by negroes of the Congo, with their wild, distorted rhythms, were to be found shortly in most excellent barbaric "harmony" with "jazz" music, also of negroid origin, imported from the United States, and African sculpture played a major rôle in the powerful European Modernism—in music and literature as well as in painting—that arose in the first decade of the present century and persisted with increasing intensity through the war years.

The painting drenched with this ingredient took a decided sexual trend, as did "jazz" music. It reached the height of feverish intensity in the great nudes of Modigliani, the fiery young Italian with hot Hebrew blood coursing, too, through his veins—nudes that match Renoir's, only exactly polar. Without being any more lascivious than Renoir's, Modigliani's morbidly-brooding creatures have a fevered exoticism that the Frenchman's little wide-eyed maidens never can experience. Modigliani brought to its climax the influence African sculpture can possibly have on painting kept white.

While Picasso and his associates were experimenting with the art of the Africans, their friendly rival, Matisse, high-priest of the Fauves, was examining the art of the Chinese and the Persians.

Matisse found nothing more alarming than Whistler, a long time before, had discovered in Japanese prints—just something to play with and make pattern of. Whistler, antedating Gauguin in exploring the Orient, found only an aroma—his Japanese model is white under the thinnest

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sort of yellowish complexion powder—the Japanese of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. It was not until Gauguin's Tahitians and the fetish idols from the Congo made their advent that pigmented blood began to flow in European painting.

Gauguin, Van Gogh, Renoir, and particularly Cézanne aligned themselves militantly against the "Salon of Bouguereau." Only now in America has Cézanne triumphed over the czar of official painting whom he detested—and envied—though his victory in Europe long ago was complete.

Bouguereau, of a facile talent that approached genius, was a painter with two major impulses, religion and sex—not so far apart, if the psychoanalysts and even the older psychologists are to be believed.

In the case of Bouguereau, there are no dark recesses of the soul to be explored. He would be a greater painter if there were. In his religious phase, he supplied for a comfortable fee altar pieces for newly-built churches in Europe. In his sex inspiration, he supplied big, beautiful nudes for fashionable bar-rooms in America. His religious pieces were more sentimental than Murillo's. His nudes were smoother and more popularly alluring than Boucher's. He did Madonnas and "bathers" with equal facility and to the entire satisfaction of village priests and Bowery politicians.

Bouguereau was just one of many similar painters of almost equal talent who flourished in the gay days of the court of Napoleon III and the equally blithesome succeeding republic.

The annual official Salon was filled with smooth, lovely nudes, and countless were the picture cards and "art books" that found their way from Paris to gloomier capitals like London, New York, and Chicago, showing the wonders of contemporary painting.

These books and prints and the several originals the

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wealthy of the period could afford to buy, bring home and present ultimately to their local museums are still a more potent influence on American taste than Cézanne, Renoir, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, and while a great number of our young painters have adopted what they can understand of the newer technique, it is still the spirit of the "Salon of Bouguereau" that animates our sex pictures—our nudes.

We, as Americans, still respond most readily to the nude on the canvas that approximates most closely the nude in nature, and while the shows and studios are alive with female nakedness, we still have much of the keyhole approach in our "appreciation." Our Sumners in New York and our Yarrows in Chicago still advocate the loin cloth, and the more liberal of us still let people know how broad-minded we are when we can stand with a companion of the opposite sex before a brazen nude and restrain our blushes.

While Bouguereau was selling his life-size Magdalenes to our wealthy brewers and flashy politicians, another Frenchman, Corot (venerable, older than Bouguereau and Cézanne), was doing an equally thriving business with our more respectable millionaires in forest trees.

Yet this same Corot was sinning enormously, secretly, blasphemously—almost, we might say, committing the sin against the artistic holy ghost. In the hidden recesses of his studio never penetrated by a millionaire who was also a deacon and passed the plate in his American church, this child of Satan was painting female nudes—painting them zestfully, with all the devilish glee of the arch-sinner he was. As soon as the model was down from her dais and into her clothes and out the secret entrance, the canvas was taken from its easel by the painter and turned face to the wall.

Only now, long after the death of Corot, are these

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nudes being brought to light, and they exhibit him as one of the great masters of the female form of all time.

Corot feared that exposure of his nudes would jeopardize the sale of his forest trees to American millionaires. Bouguereau, czar of the Salon, could get away with Magdalenes and Madonnas—his religious paintings were for Europe while his nudes were for America. If the European priest and the Bowery bar-tender ever happened to meet, they might have a good laugh. But fancy an American millionaire going to Corot's studio to see a dream forest and stumbling onto a life-size nude as brazen as those Courbet, a low, vulgar French peasant, exiled for his part in the Commune, had been doing. (This Courbet, incidentally, was Corot's friend, and it was he who gave the young Manet courage to exhibit "Olympia"—and Courbet sleeps among the giants in painting.)

The barriers in America between the buyers of Bouguereau and the buyers of Corot had holes knocked in them in the nineties and palings broken off by the advent in New York, Washington, and Chicago of Anders Zorn, the lusty Swede. It was not so much Zorn's art, strong and breezy as it was, as Zorn's social conquests. He came to America and etched from life portraits of everybody socially prominent from President Cleveland and J. P. Morgan down, not forgetting their ladies and various potent dowagers.

Zorn was a lion everywhere he went—a lion with a portfolio of breath-taking nude studies of his robust young peasant cook, Ida, whom both Rubens and Renoir would have sought to wrest from him for model.

Zorn put not only himself across, but also Ida—ankle-deep, knee-deep, but always short of waist-deep in the great rugged natural bathing pools along the rock-bound coast of Sweden. Even the millionaires fell for Ida—to their secret delight, perhaps—some of them possibly had longed to possess a Bouguereau. Zorn's advent, while it

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liberalized the American attitude toward the nude, had little effect on American artists. His strong individuality could not survive the tumultuous tide of the "Salon of Bouguereau."

While the nude is rampant everywhere in the contemporary art of the Caucasian world, and while it is challengingly the most significant expression of sex of our time, subtle flirtation expressed in sex symbols, though in abeyance, as we have said, is not quite extinct.

In the days of gallantry, the fan, the glove, a flower, the slipper, and, most daringly, the garter were tonic fillips.

Fragonard's "Happy Hazards of the Swing," with a young man lying on the grass looking up at his young lady, her hair and skirts flying as she sails back and forth through the invigorating air, catching such glimpses of forbidden thighs as he can, is scarcely to be equalled in tonic sex suggestion by the boldest nudes of a Renoir or a Bouguereau.

Then there was Boucher, a master of the nude, who knew, however, even better ways to convey sly sex suggestion. And so, against one of his bold-eyed, naked nymphs he placed a big, full-blown rose where Eve wore a modest fig leaf, and created a roaring masterpiece. The gallant suggestion of the rose, sacred age-old to lovers, is the difference between a great picture and just another Boucher.

The Belgian Rops, nearer our own day than either Fragonard or Boucher, attained to the heights of his cynical Satanism by really artistic, if wholly hellish, juggling of the symbolic. The garter plays a prominent rôle in his pictures, and his nudes wear stockings after the fashion of prostitutes in Continental brothels. In this fashion of stockings, Rops is followed by most of the modern Germans, including George Grosz.

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But the relics of gallantry are not put to such extreme uses in other manifestations of contemporary art.

Aubrey Beardsley, who did his share of frank pornography,—gorgeously artistic things that must still be “privately printed for subscribers only,”—originated a style of the slyly flirtatious that has been infinitely copied.

Beardsley was an epicure and dilettante of the art strain of Whistler and the literary strain of Oscar Wilde. His dilly-dalliance was in his emotions only, however, for in his short life he produced enormously.

Feminine apparel has no possibilities of suggestion, however finely spun, that Beardsley did not sense and did not know how to convey. He translated the flip of a skirt, the poise of a slipper, the flutter of a ribbon, to his white cardboard in a language as subtle as the vagaries that flit through a flirtatious feminine brain. Everything he did was redolent of sex.

Though chiefly an artist in black and white, Beardsley has been the inspiration of many painters, none of them equal to him in subtlety, but all seeking to express by his modern method the things that used to be said in a more stilted age—though charmingly, still—by Fragonard, Watteau, Lancret.

Beardsley's army of disciples are engaged mainly in doing magazine covers and advertisements for silk hose and dainty lingerie. But his influence is felt in higher circles as well. In conjunction with a fellow spirit and contemporary, Toulouse-Lautrec, vastly his superior in genius, more powerful and brutal, though scarcely less graceful when he wanted to be, Beardsley inspired a whole group of lighter Parisians painting the gayer side of Bohemia, of whom the best is perhaps the popular Van Dongen. It was Beardsley who showed the way if he doesn't always set the pattern.

Sex in modern painting, it may be concluded, is as bold

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and varied in its expression as in modern philosophy—and modern life.

Painters since the revolt against the “academy” and since the promulgation of the theory of unique individuality instead of adherence to precept, have ransacked the ages, as preserved in the museums, and have gone to all corners of the earth in search of themes and motifs. The more daring have delved down, like the German philosophers, into the depths of their souls, and some of them have not been awed by what they found there. With the frankness that has followed the bursting of the bans of religious and social taboos, these latter few have set down on their canvases what they have observed, as boldly and honestly as the philosophers. Perhaps they have been a bit overzealous—overserious. The things they have done with grim faces oftentimes are no more important than the things Rowlandson did with a grin—many of the terrible mysteries unearthed by Freud are to be found amid the uproarious haw-haws of Rabelais.

Chapter Fifteen

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MODERN SCULPTURE

by EDAN WRIGHT

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SEX in modern sculpture is of the same “physio-chemical” brand that causes a man to “eye” a woman passing in the street. As natural and as powerful.

Sculpture is by its very nature confined largely to the human form and in modern sculpture that form is narrowed down almost exclusively to the female, the favoured expression of beauty today as it was of all the ages. Geniuses of the chisel in all eras have created both male and female deities. The gods they wrought are great in a degree respective to their individual skill, but their goddesses are greater. It is only the women they made that have paid their greens fees on Mount Olympus. Because men have not sublimated their erotic impulses from their considerations of women as the epitome of beauty and perfection, these female figures the modern sculptors have made inevitably contain some sexual content.

Cynics like Schopenhauer found it easy to decry the cult of feminism with such pessimisms as “It is only the man whose intellect is clouded by his sexual impulses that could give the name of the fair sex to that under-sized, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped, and short-legged race: for the whole beauty of the sex is bound up with this impulse.”

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Instead of calling them beautiful, there would be more warrant for describing women as the unæsthetic sex."

For the brainy Schopenhauer it was merely a case in intellect. But sculptors never worried about their intellects. They worried about form. For the sculptor who was not sex-minded there was little escape. Painters could sublimate with a sunset, still life, or landscape. A few sculptors like the Frenchman Barye found an outlet in sculpturing the primitive animals of the jungle. Others carried on their revolt by embracing some of the "Isms" of the painters and reducing human forms to inorganic motifs. Archipenko among the Cubists and Gaudier-Brzeska, leader of the Vorticists, were successful with their abstractions, but the former eventually sought a return by way of the sexual and the latter wove his warped emotional impulses into the very fibre of his inorganic creed.

Dressing up the nude with clothes was no loophole from the fleshpots of sex because few possessed the genius to make clothing look sculptural. Constantin Meunier, akin in spirit to the genre sculptors of the later Greek days, and in the group of Belgian sculptors, influenced by the French painter Millet, who sought to popularize the cult of labour by giving the workingman's body an heroic and classic beauty, succeeded only because he reduced his coal miners and furnace men's costumes to close-fitting trousers, with the occasional addition of a tight jerkin or leathern apron so that the muscular forms beneath could be treated as if nude. Ernst Barlach, because he used clothing for a different reason, to add to the earthy gravity of his wood figures, did not give it the air of sculpture but added only to the grossness of his ponderous peasant physiques.

The Greeks alone of the sculptors of the ages were not obsessed by sex (unless we bring in those primitive artists of the Congo who sculptured their figures with pronounced sex organs but kept them so busy holding 'up a platter they couldn't possibly have any time to be concerned with

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each other). The Greeks recognized sex but didn't allow it to weigh on their consciences. They made a few rules. They said we will have wives to bear children, concubines to alleviate the regular tedium of the marriage bed, courtesans for companionship, and lowly dicteriades or auletrides, cheap and plentiful, for our lusts. Having arranged matters to give them the least trouble, they set about enjoying themselves. Any embarrassments that arose within these precincts they referred to the deities they had created to superintend human affairs.

With us, because we cannot solve our problem and free our minds, sex obtrudes to the point of obsession.

The Greek ideal of sculpture was a form combining beauty and strength; the female form for beauty, the male for strength. They mixed a little strength with beauty for their statues of women and a little beauty with strength for the men. The figures approximated but were never androgynous. They never destroyed the original ideal.

Their sculpture was not sensuous as we understand it. When living models posed, the sculptured forms were always gods and goddesses, human and sensuous deities only because their creators couldn't think of them as different from themselves, but ideal in their status as divinities and perfection of beauty. When Phryne, one of the most renowned of Greek courtesans, posed for the sculptor Praxiteles for the first absolute nude in Greek statuary, the Cnidian Venus, she was not Phryne the woman or hetaira, but Phryne idealized into the goddess she had represented in the Eleusinian mysteries.

Michelangelo, god of Europe as he was of the Italians, revived Greek sculpture in the Renaissance. He unrolled the mummy wrappings of the Middle Ages and brought the nude back into its own. He studied the Greek recipe and set up his apparatus for the divine cookery. But the colossus of sculpture had a perverse sex twist in his own make-up and when his figures sprang forth in a titanic ex-

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plosion, his men emerged all strength, and his women more strength than delicate feminine beauty. They were a race of giants and giantesses, expressing desperate force with their buttressed attitudes and tense muscles, carved in two planes instead of the Greek four, with limbs glued to the body, their creator believing that only those statues were good which could be rolled from the top of a mountain without breaking and all that was broken off in the fall was superfluous. His autocracy lasted until the rise of the French master, Auguste Rodin, for no one, until Rodin started his pyrotechnics, had been able to put up a display magnificent enough even to threaten his prestige.

The Italian Canova during the last years of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth, on the threshold of modern art, was the last of the sculpture czars to put new life into the classic and keep it classical. From his Vulcan's forge emerged gods and goddesses glowing with new spiritual energies, but perversely as calm and cold as ever. The almost imperceptible taint of human personality he had endowed them with glimmered for an instant in Pauline Borghese and his Venus of her; she was Venus but just a tiny bit of Pauline, too. Canova's classicism, dubbed neo-classicism, was not so much the Hercules mixture of Michelangelo, but a little more the beauty-strength mixture of the old Greeks.

While the classic age was satisfied with Phidias, genius of the older, and Praxiteles of the younger Attic school, while the Renaissance rested all its sculpture laurels on Michelangelo, and the neo-classic age looked with pride upon Canova, Rodin had to elect himself to get in as god-head of the moderns. Rodin was destined to do more than rule a kingdom as large as that of his predecessors. He was to break the spell of the classic and resuscitate art from academic permutations and commutations. No one before him, not even Canova, had been able to extract the beauty

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from the classic ideal and fashion flesh and blood men and women.

François Girardon, working about the middle of the seventeenth century as Le Brun's favourite sculptural agent, had chanced upon a new formula, probably without guessing its power, when he carved the relief of the nymphs bathing for the Château de Versailles park. He made women who were wordly with nothing of the sacred in their make-up and, above all, natural. It was one of those fortuitous incidents in sculptural history, but unfortunately nothing more. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, and Alexandre Falguière just before Rodin, had advanced a short way along the path of naturalism pointed out by Dalou with their agitated and carnal types of nude women, but they had merely established temporary guide posts in a preliminary survey.

Rodin meditated on the Greek ideal which had grown very academic by this time, pampered and jealously guarded by museum and art school imprimatur. He knew the old gods and goddesses were dead, that the form the art doyens had foisted on the students as the living soul was just the dead body meticulously embalmed into a semblance of life. But it was more than just the clinging shrouds of a dead art he had to rend. It was tradition equipped with tentacles of such length and strength that sculpture had long ceased to struggle in its strangle-hold.

There had always been plenty of classic models, preserved in marble, a very nearly eternal medium, for the sculptors to emulate, and when these ran out, there were the carvings on old coins to go by. Painting had long since dropped out of the classic race, for the old canvases had crumbled to dust, and there had been only the literary reports of Herodotus and Pliny, hardly full enough, for the painters to follow. In copying the Greeks, the sculptors had eyes only for the ideal and not what lay behind it. This was always the case. Later when they copied the

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negroes and Indians they tried to make goddesses but, because they could not give them religious feeling, their sculpture lost life and became academic.

Rodin cast about him for something in the spirit of the times, some viridity to inject colour into the corpse-like pallor of post-Renaissance sculpture. He found it in the theories of his friends, the impressionistic painters, in the marvellous things Monet was doing with his new conception of light and colour, and in the effects Renoir was achieving with his dazzling nudes. He looked with fresh vision on the antique torsos to discover colour in the light and shadows there and to detect the mobility of the muscles beneath the scarcely perceptible inundations and roughnesses. He found life in the Greek idea where the others had seen only smoothness and coldness.

He applied these discoveries to his marble figures and created forms that had the radiant luminosity of living flesh, forms that glowed with colour and took the light like the velvety skin of Renoir's nudes. He fashioned sinuous beauties that all but breathed and palpitated, but more important, flesh and blood men and women, not Venuses and Hercules'.

He cleared the air of the dust of the crumbling antique. Creative impulses could now spring fresh from nature and not by proxy from the antique. Just as Lysippus had found the Polyclitus canon of sculpture, the one to seven length for a figure, a hindrance to further development, and had tapped the founts of nature for a new one to eight ratio, modern sculptors after Rodin no longer had to make the length of the face a certain percentage of the height or the circumference of the thigh a definite fraction of the circumference of the waist. The sky was the limit. Beauty could be Epstein's negroid white woman or Archipenko's cubistic torches.

The sculptors copied only what they saw at first, then gradually began to give the form an emotional expression

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and finally to reject the objective for the subjective in sculpturing their own emotional reactions. The sex-minded could get as sexy as they wished. Rodin was the Pygmalion who had brought to life the frigid, strong, beautiful, sex-less Galatea of the Greek ideal.

Rodin took one invaluable precept from the Greeks. Hellenic sculptors had familiarized themselves with the nude by constant observation at the contests where the youthful athletes boxed, wrestled, ran, and threw the discus; on the streets and at the theatre, where the courtesans promenaded with bodies scarcely veiled with gauze, and bosoms open; and at the religious fêtes where they divested themselves of all raiment to take the parts of the goddesses.

With a fair-sized fortune at his disposal, Rodin assembled the choicest models in Paris, male and female, in his atelier and instructed them to walk around the studio naturally as if in pursuit of their everyday activities. He observed them constantly and when he chanced upon a pose that charmed him, cried, "hold!" and modelled a fugitive sketch. He made these notes in plaster feverishly, fearful lest the precious inspiration of the moment should escape him. He made no reference to them when he came to do his big work but chiselled from a synthesis of stored memories after the fashion of the Oriental painters.

Even these large pieces were done under hectic emotional stress. He left most of them clinging to the matrix, simulating the blurred effects of the impressionistic painters, but as if afraid, too, he had given them so much life they would walk away if not thus chained.

His divine impatience drew down many vilifications on his head, along with cries that his work reeked of cosmic sentimentality, moralizing, and overmuch borrowing from the other arts. But this was mostly a later development. The academics in 1864 had criticized him for his bold originality and impudicity. Rodin's fault lay in that he had lived a life so long and prolific in works that by the

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time his originals had been multiplied by the figures of the many followers who copied him, his style by sheer numbers of examples had palled on the appetite. The god was left to roam the Olympian forests where he had once uprooted trees in the thunder of his impetuous progress an old man, regarded with deprecating coughs and half-smiles by the young moderns he had inspired earlier with the violence of his passions.

In London recently, at an important exhibition of more than a hundred of his works at the Leicester Gallery, long enough after his death in 1917 to attain a more unbiased opinion, he made a decided impression. The galleries were full all day long and people came not once but twice to view the fragment of his colossal output. "Eve" was there and the "Age of Bronze," the male form, with the beautiful knees and ankles, which Rodin had originally been accused of having cast direct from a living model.

In his frankly sexual pieces, the men are most often pretty boys though there is plenty of male virility in "The Creation of Man," the "Age of Iron," and "The Thinker." But his women are some of the most charmingly human forms that have ever been created. The little "Eve," way under life size, and the more lovely because of it, glows with life from one of her delicately modelled little toes to the sensitive finger tips hugging herself in a narcissistic pose. The marble is faintly veined, translucent, and almost miraculous in its "aliveness." Eve is a diminutive goddess, warm, voluptuous, passionate, but a woman, and not one, but all, woman incarnate.

However loudly the later moderns deny Rodin, or, like the children of Israel, think they have cunningly betrayed their god by worshipping the little gilded calves of Cubism, Vorticism, and their kind, or escaped by going into the fastness of the African jungle or by snooping around Egyptian coffin lids for their motifs, the powerful

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fist of the great French master is still chiselling his glorious curves into the very angles they are so proud of.

Modern sculptors, conscious of sex, yet unconsciously afraid it might fetter their art, have at various periods in their careers Judas-like denied and affirmed it, kissing the marble or metal into voluptuousness while they clutched for the thirty pieces of silver to buy their membership into the near-pontifical lodge of African head-hunters and one-eyed phalanges.

Following Rodin, the first god of Modernism, came another Frenchman, Aristide Maillol of the heavy nudes, almost exclusively female. Maillol has combined a severe naturalism with classic power to make a race of young Amazons, lusty and human. He is perhaps the greatest living classicist though he reverts to the classic without his figures being gods and goddesses, without the classic symbolism.

His nudes are healthy Venuses, strong women with splendid passionate bodies, who have spent their time walking in the open fields and engaging in fierce athletic contests with Hercules' rather than lounging and languishing in their boudoirs on Mount Olympus.

They are all built on a similar pattern with bodies nearly identical, though their faces vary. Gossip has it that Maillol's wife is his model, which if true, would account for their singular sisterhood. They are always divinely at ease, sitting, standing, or walking; placid creatures but with a placidity of latent power. Their solidity and massiveness has detracted none from their grace and simplicity. Some are more naturalistic, others are classical to the point of archaism. The most successful combine the virtues of both. Always they are of great beauty and marvellous structure.

Most of them are in terra cotta, reminiscent of the Etruscans who were the only people in antiquity to use it with success for large statues. Maillol has popularized a

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medium most suited to his needs, one whose soft surface takes the light without violent contrasts.

There is more in his work of the naturalistic, though he distorted when he wanted to. One nude female torso, slightly elongated, is an Archipenko pattern, except that instead of flaming like a luminous torch, it is firmly rooted to its base, and whereas in Archipenko's torsos we never miss the arms, legs, and head, in this figure of Maillol's, by comparison, they look as if they had been chopped off. One of his nudes seated on a stone with legs outstretched before her has the snub-nose effect and lithe animal body of a Renoir model, but most of them are more stolid and weighty like the heavy Rubens type.

His male nudes are muscular, but by contrast, so slim they appear to be almost attenuated. His "Young Runner" in bronze is typical of this. In creating the female type, he gave them all the rugged vitality, all the energy, and left nothing for the men. It is almost as though Genesis had been reversed, the woman created first and the man afterwards, not even out of a woman's rib, but out of what little material was left over.

In some of Maillol's earliest manifestations he was contemporary with Rodin, though he sought less for the pictorial impressionism, less for the surface loveliness, and kept more to the truly sculptural, to the eternal solidity. Maillol strove for the simple planes of the primitive rather than smoothness and elegance, for the calm and powerful female physique rather than the fevered little femininities of Rodin's world; the simple "Baigneuse" as opposed to the baroque "Fugit Amor ou la Course à l'abîme."

Emile-Antoine Bourdelle, French, born the same year as Maillol, and but recently dead, has done work which exemplifies the common Hellenism existing between them. Bourdelle's figures have the same suavity and repose, his "La Baigneuse" comparing quite closely with the Maillol nudes. He has the same spiritual kinship for Rodin, into

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whose studio in the early days he came as a pupil, to develop later into his most prominent disciple. Beyond this, the Maillol-Rodin brotherhood with Bourdelle ceases.

Bourdelle thinks of sculpture in terms of architecture; the same sort of feeling Epstein has for his monumental works. This was the psychology pervading much of Greek and Gothic sculpture, to which Bourdelle shows an alliance. The Greek and Gothic sculptors were motivated by religion, the former executing many figures to adorn public buildings, temples, and private sanctuaries, in commemoration of victories over the Persian invaders, the latter caring almost nothing for sculpture in the round, devoting themselves to the ornamenting of cathedrals, churches, and tombs. With the dawn of the industrial age, sculpture was divorced from architecture as something superfluous and undesirable. The human form was expelled for that of pure pattern—until Bourdelle brought it back into prominence.

His "La Vierge d'Alsace" on a hill-top in Alsace, is one of the noblest of the World War monuments. His virgin is over three times natural size, a blend of French Gothic and archaic Greek with a Byzantine formality of drapery. She is typical of the designer-architect-sculptor alliance that is Bourdelle's artistic make-up. In her the familiar Gothic slouch has been revived, but she is no attenuated sex-drained virgin of the Middle Ages. She is a healthy archaic figure, of Maillol's race of super-women. Bourdelle, however, in consorting his women with architecture deprived them of most of their sex.

He has done some sexy Greek things, queer centaurs, and mythological subjects, brought down to date, thus showing himself somewhat of a symbolist. He takes the goddess of fruit, Pomona, portrays her as a nude woman holding apples and calls his composition "Fruit."

Maillol and Bourdelle had accomplished a rapid transi-

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tion from Rodin with their goddesses but the way had been easy.

Joseph Bernard, of the younger French school, is not unlike Maillol, his figures having a certain Greek flavour, but they are less weighty, and in the "Girl with a Pitcher" and "Dancing Woman and Child" have a certain dream quality that puts them in the realm of the elusive nymphs of mythology. His figures are extremely graceful in a formalized naturalism, out of the realm of mortal women.

There is something of the Bernard style in the Danes, Johannes Bjerg and Einar Utzon-Frank. Despiau, a pupil of Rodin, reverted to the academic idea, but to that of the Renaissance rather than to the Roman or Greek variety. His principal work is in portraiture, though he has done several nudes similar in inspiration to Maillol.

A national spirit comparable in Jugo-Slavia to that of Eric Gill's in England, but containing none of Gill's personal flavour is the main ingredient of Ivan Meštrović's work. Meštrović takes ethnic types for his subjects and doses them with an amalgam of barbarism and heroism verging on the melodramatic. In his religious work the prescription contains a tincture of the Byzantism that is the heritage of his land. His "Maiden of Kossova," "Mother and Child," and "A Widow" present the powerful womanhood of the highlands, the Montenegrin women who fought side by side with their men in the Great War. He sculptures facial types, but in the formal draperies, hair conventions, Hellenized and Byzantized, they are the souls rather than the bodies; a sculptural saga of Balkan womanhood.

There is much of the architectural in his work, perhaps because in this alliance alone he found the bigness with which to express the pulse beat of his nation. His supreme achievement is in an architectural setting, the memorial mausoleum to the old Croatian family of Racić at Cavtat which he completed in 1922. Here the archaic Greek and

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religious Byzantism of his style have produced a dramatic emotional credenza.

His creations are not important as men and women, but rather as the conventionalized and nationalized souls of both, though in his relief of the "Dancing Woman" with the luxuriant hair stylized into an interesting pattern, he has put a bit more of the sexual and less of the heroic.

He made the acquaintance of Rodin in Vienna when Rodin had not yet reached the summit of his fame. It was an influence which no doubt whetted his already aroused enthusiasm for Greek sculpture, but led him to the severity of the archaic rather than to the naturalism of the classic.

Meštrović had in his following a man who was older and a Dalmatian like himself, Toma Rosandić. The latter was a stone-mason at Spalato where Meštrović was bound apprentice to a marble carver. Rosandić has several styles but when aping Meštrović he does so without matching his cleverness with the draperies. He has also built a memorial mausoleum on the little island of Brać, but one in which he misses Meštrović's perfection just as in his smaller works.

He does better when he is himself. And though he works well in plaster and metal, he is far more clever with his wood sculpture. There is the palisander wood statue of a "Young Woman" with the trunk of the tree from which it was carved as its base that is a charming naturalistic nude, and quite original. In another of his moods he creates little French ornamental things, like "La Pucelle," and occasionally he produces a work that is naturalistic and powerful as his "Desire," a torso with no little sex content, in which he verges on the masterly.

He shows more of the Rodin influence than does Meštrović. Without the Meštrović comparison he might have

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been greater; with it, he sometimes just misses being a second rater.

The Englishman Eric Gill is an outstanding phenomenon in modern sculpture. He has a queer religious-national-psychology that has made his work more individualistic than that of any other modern sculptor. His work is national after an Anglo-Saxon fashion but very personal in its psychic resistance to the influences of other moderns, and its saturation with mystic-religious soul chemicals. None of the usual Rodin signs are in evidence in his pieces, except in a very late torso of a kneeling woman in which he departed from his traditional formula.

Gill made his first essay in æsthetic fields in lettering, which he practiced for ten years, executing commissions for carving letters and heraldic shields for tombstones. The discovering of his artistic powers created in him a soul frenzy comparable to the tortured exorcizing of the early monks and saints.

Religion had formed a vital but at first unconscious well in his life from his earliest days. Gradually, drop upon drop, it had worn its way into the bedrock of his personality. The son of a Congregationalist missionary who had sweated in prayers for the pagan souls of the South Sea Islanders, later a curate of a dissenting sect in Brighton and bishop of the Anglican church at Chichester, Gill had embraced in turn each of the promises of salvation espoused by his changeable father. He added two more to the total of his own, Agnosticism and Socialism.

His later doctrines were satisfactory as long as he was a craftsman in the lettering trade, but woefully inadequate for the creative artist. To begin his new life as a sculptor he equipped himself with a religious creed of his own making but one whose truth he speedily began to doubt because he felt he had constantly to assert and defend it.

His succeeding and frantic search for a belief that was

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universal or nearly so, and definite in its statement of faith, led him straight into the bosom of the Catholic Church. Peace here at last freed his soul in traditional channels that were narrow enough to limit but deep enough to give the requisite depth to his art. It followed naturally that his sculpture would be of a religious nature, but at times, because of the Gill peculiarities, paradoxically, of a pagan religious temper.

His first big commission was the "Stations of the Cross" in Westminster Cathedral. Crudely beautiful and flavoured with an old Anglo-Saxon extract, they were his soul hymn of release. The lettering which he had done first on drawings of engines as a child was never forgotten. It went to decorate the "Stations" and many other of his religious works, though it faded more and more into the background.

Religious themes have not saved Gill from the effluvium of criticism. The people of Leeds set up a terrific uproar when "Christ Driving out the Moneylenders from the Temple," his war memorial for the University of Leeds, was unveiled, with their suspicions that he was poking fun at their commercial instincts and caricaturing them as the moneylenders.

He came in for a share of sensational newspaper copy, such as is Epstein's usual prerogative in London, recently, when the Duchess of Rutland, dowager duchess of London sculpture, declared his bas-relief decoration proposed for the new broadcasting house in Portland place was "awful," that the proportions of the woman's body, and especially the hands, were all wrong, though "it might have been worse," and "it is better than the work with which Mr. Epstein and Henry Moore generally favour us."

An obvious manifestation of the influence of the Catholic Church doctrines in Gill's work is the repetition of the "Madonna and Child" varied with the nearly identical "Mother and Child." The figures are all mature, but

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with a child-like maturity. They are stylized, formal, but primitively pagan in feeling, which causes us to wonder whether they did not have some inspiration in the fires of imagination kindled in Gill's brain by his father's romantic tales of the South Sea Islands. They are more the little girl-mothers of the Islands warmed to an adulthood by the climate before they were out of their childhood than Anglo-Saxon madonnas. And they have the same unconscious and ancient naturalism. His crowned Gothic "Madonna and Child" of 1912 is more national; but they all have the sort of wistful mysticism which Andrea della Robbia first bestowed on his fifteenth century virgins.

Gill took these same little child-goddesses, beautiful, strong, and simple creatures and made them definitely pagan by developing them into dancers and tumblers. Religion merged into the sensual to produce a paganism that was once religious in the fanatical sense, a reversion to the old religion of the sort that sanctioned prostitution as an offering to the temple deities.

His "Splits" are frankly sexual with bracelets, anklets, eyes, hair, and aureoles of their breasts painted. In them, as in many of his figures, he uses the hair as a foil to the human form, in much the same way that Mestrovic employs the drapery. He is perhaps the only modern sculptor to use paint in his figures with the success of the Greek and mediæval sculptors.

His "Tumbler" of 1912 in Hoptonwood stone, an English marble that has a dull cream colour and takes a beautiful dull polish, is another mystic-pagan in a pose that is a reminder of the contorting effects of the Chinese goddesses. She has a stylized cap for hair, a familiar modern convention, but Gill has added something of his own as he always does, a little tail in the back for a braid.

His first essay at carving a human figure was that of a woman, the "Estin Thalassa" of 1910. He has clung to his first love and has done his best work with women,

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whether primitive little madonnas or frank little pagans. Gill has sprung as far from this original anatomical ineptitude as to create in 1928 his masterpiece, "Mankind," a nude torso of a kneeling woman, reduced to the fundamentals and treated naturalistically with just a touch of the archaic. It is human and sexual.

The training of the powerful lens of the X-ray and the penetrating probe of the psychiatrist on Gaudier-Brzeska, the brilliant young god of the English Vorticists though a Frenchman by birth, reveals sex complexes as twisted as Michelangelo's, but infinitely more subtle. He is the well-beloved of the gods, shot through the head leading a charge at twenty-three, at Neuville-Saint-Vaast, in June, 1915, of the World War. The few works he left, an amazing number considering his youth, have the marks of a genius whose virtuosity would no doubt have ultimately placed him in the ranks of the venerable godheads of sculpture had he survived the war.

His relationship with Sophie Brzeska, neurotic Pole, whom he first met in the Saint-Geneviève library of Paris in 1910 when he was the eighteen-year-old Henri Gaudier, and she thirty-eight, was the sexual twist that prepared him spiritually for Vorticism, still-born child of the Cubists. He had been in sympathy with England ever since his first studies there at fourteen and his abnormal mother-child relationship with Miss Brzeska, his own variety of the familiar Oedipus complex, unconsciously attracted and aligned him to a movement which sought a spiritual centre of things, beyond the organic into the ken of the inorganic.

His "Maternity Group" is perhaps most representative of this. In it the mother and child are so moulded together that one seems irrevocably connected with the other in a never-ending cycle, a mystical conception of physical processes in the inorganic pattern of the soul. His "Woman and Child" has the same elusive flavour, though it is archaic Gothic more than Vorticistic.

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Mother and child? Vorticism? Miss Brzeska and Gaudier?

His "Dancer" is undoubtedly Miss Brzeska. It is elongated and attenuated, Gothic in spirit and archaic in simplicity, fitting into the imaginary geometrical system of the early Attic sculptors. In it there is no representation of motion, just the full expression of it, an achievement even beyond Rodin's kinetic dream of motion as the transition from one attitude to another.

Gaudier-Brzeska had nothing but profound admiration for Rodin. He did his pieces, even his portraits, with the same impetuosity, scarcely carving some of them out of the block. It was the same impulsiveness combined with boastful assurance that caused him to declare recklessly to Epstein, when he met him at an exhibition (an account given in H. S. Ede's *Savage Messiah*), that he cut direct in stone, though he had never up to that time done a single work in it. When Epstein came on Sunday to see his pieces, Gaudier-Brzeska, who had worked frantically all night, had three original works lying carelessly around his studio.

The Epstein influence is evident in his "Red Stone Dancer," similar in effect to Epstein's "Torso of the Rock Drill," but since Epstein was allied with the Vorticists about the same time, both may be conceded to be simultaneous outgrowths of the same influence.

Gaudier-Brzeska's most finished work, a small torso in white marble, with the same slight swing of the shoulders and of the body on the hips that gives life to the "Dancer" has the flesh look of Rodin. It is naturalistic, sexual. In it Gaudier-Brzeska has definitely shunted the inorganic for the organic he never quite lost sight of, to carry it to perfection in a female form. His few men, like "The Wrestler," are primeval creatures, brutal, terrifying, the strength rather than the beauty of the male.

When Gaudier-Brzeska, the lone god of the Vorticists, died, Vorticism died with him.

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The American Jew, Jacob Epstein, of Russian-Polish parentage, who grew up in New York and made London his home, is a dramatic god of women, but not such a one as women care about. He is the wicked genie who transforms their beauty into ugliness. But the negroid features he endows them with give them a primitive power, perhaps with more of a sexual kick, if they only knew it, than the thousands of "pretty" portraits other sculptors have made.

He has stripped off the layers of flesh and found the modern white woman, like the Congo savage, a creature of primitive emotions and passions. He cares as little for their smooth skin as for their Caucasian features, or pink and white complexion, being notorious for smearing his bronzes, of an earthy colour, almost black, with roughnesses that have been popularly termed his "mud-pie" finish. Their bodies do not attract him either, for he confines himself to busts to concentrate on facial expression.

The introduction of African sculpture into modern European art came after Gauguin had discovered the Tahitian, Whistler the Japanese, Picasso the Egyptian, and Matisse the Persian. In the wild scurry for new motifs, the artists happened on the negro curios in the Paris shops. Vlaminck had been the first to discover them for painting, and Epstein was their most powerful master of ceremonies in the province of sculpture.

Congo figures, mostly fetishes, gave him his distortions, exaggerations which he, like the painters, carried into art without taking into consideration the whole Congo outlook. The Greeks had been dead serious with their gods. In endowing them with superhuman beauty they thought, if they thought about it at all, they could very well do without humour. The Congo negroes were just as free sexually as the Greeks in a tropical land where nudity was a necessity. Their brand of humour was bound up in a sense of the

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grotesque and fantastic, so they distorted the sexual organs of the body with the arms, legs, head, and the rest.

The foisting of African motifs on modern art, was as much a revolt against sex, of the sort that lay in the naturalistic curves of a woman's body, as the "Isms," but here again, the revolt instead of freeing art from sex by adopting the motifs of people unconscious of it, focused on it instead.

Epstein's sculpture right from the start slapped people in the face, not playful little pats, but hearty resounding smacks, and an exhibition of his in any gallery shamed the tea parties in the precincts where art devotees gathered to discuss the "horrid" things, generally in terms of such shibboleths as "indecent," "salacious." He has always been sensational newspaper copy and there have been more controversies over him than over any other artist now living.

He is the incurable rebel following rebellion with counter-rebellion, creating the cubistic "Venus" where people expected a goddess with delicate curves; the grotesque "Rima" of the bird fountain, instead of Hudson's exotic creature; and the gaunt Egyptian-Jewish Christ of the enormous hands in place of the gentle Messiah, so that some have begun to suspect that he shocks for effect. The press has made of him a legendary Lucifer, whom many would applaud the God of Milton for throwing bag and baggage out of heaven, a dramatic Beelzebub, divulging the primitive emotions of women with satanic glee.

Epstein is the eclectic, going back to the primitive of all art, Chaldean, Mayan, Aztec, Chinese, Egyptian, Indian, and Greek along with his negro—influences he combines to suit his fancy. He experimented with Cubism and Vorticism between 1913 and 1914, producing the "Venus" in white marble, suggestive also of the Congo fetish and amulet, with his "Rock Drill" in polished bronze. Eric Gill is supposed to have had his share in the Epstein artistic make-up in Epstein's monument to Oscar Wilde at Père

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Lachaise, a work which had been considered so immoral that the Prefect of the Seine covered the sexual organs with plaster and the whole with straw. Gaudier says in his letter to Miss Brzeska, quoted by Ede in *Savage Messiah*, that when Epstein arrived in Paris he "took off the straw, then the plaster, and restored to his Wilde his *couilles de taureau*, which hung down at least half a yard, and through the petition of some artists he was able to get the better of the Civil authorities."

Epstein's first interest in sculpture was stimulated by exhibitions of Rodin's work but it was the massive studies of Rodin's later years and the portrait bronzes of his early days, all of the emotional content and power of Rodin, and none of the softness of the flesh or the saccharification, that appealed to him.

He was most at home with his "Congofied" portraits. He took a good-looking woman, the Duchess of Marlborough, and made her more negroid than he did Paul Robeson, the negro singer, in a bronze portrait bust of him done in 1928. His white men, of whom he has made many portraits, for some reason or other have escaped the Congo "curse."

Many of the abstractionist sculptors in their efforts to escape from the sculptural atrophy they felt lay in the tenets of Rodin as it had in the academic precepts of the classic, succeeded only in getting themselves caught in old King Minos' labyrinth and eaten up by his minotaur. But there was one, a modern Theseus who had also made friends with Ariadne, the king's daughter, who gave him the thread that enabled him to make his way back after he had slain the man-bull.

Such an one was Alexander Archipenko, the highest god in our female pantheon, a sculptor who has devoted more energies to their glorification than has Ziegfeld.

In his first experiments he was extremely cubistic, but even in these "advanced abstractions" he never forgot the

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beauty that was the heritage of the natural female form. He altered his original formula until he finally evolved a torso that was strangely beautiful like all women, but like no particular woman ever born. She was a creature of science, even of architecture, but no mechanical robot, for she had art. She was a tall flaming goddess amalgamated with equal mixtures of soul and "human" stuff, with a sexual kick stronger than any naturalistic form evolved in modern sculpture. She retained the spiritual essence of woman, and the semblance of Cubism, but was an obloquy, a Cubism whose power lay in the highlights of its luscious curves, charms of the same tonicity as the soft little Rodin Venuses.

His lovely elongated torso which he created again and again was as beautiful as anything Greek but with nothing of the idealized Greek naturalism, with the life-punch of Rodin, yet smart, modern, sophisticated—and cubistic. Devoid of the carnality of sex, yet full of the beauty filtered into a powerful elixir, his sensitized nudes fairly quiver with nervous energy and vitality. But in lieu of the Rodin flesh and blood he gave them a sexual virus and smoothness beyond any mortal skin texture.

Archipenko, a Russian living in New York, combines the skill of a mechanic, engineer, and experimenter, which was his heritage from his father. To this background he added his own keen sense of mathematical proportion comparable to that of Leonardo da Vinci. Some critics have even sensed an analogy between his creations and the Einstein theory.

His training in Cubism, which had taught him to restrict himself to the bare essentials, and his ceaseless experiments with new problems, were invaluable when he came to his later masterpieces. He left off the heads and arms, not in the chopped-off fashion modern sculptors have been addicted to ever since archæologists in the Renaissance began hauling out mutilated ancient torsos, in imitation, but

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because he wanted to concentrate everything in the torso. He succeeded so well that the "extras" are never missed. Rodin, in his "Striding John the Baptist," had been the first to have the torso recognized as a complete work. Archipenko made of it a particular, wondrous work.

The complete body is rare with him, but when he endowed some of his little Venuses with all their naturalistic parts he elongated them like the Botticelli creations. To others he gave just the organic outline expressing the positive convexities in terms of negative cavities. He has done daring things like the Gothic "Salome," a dancer without arms and legs, but one who as far as Alexander Archipenko's bayadere is concerned could do without them very well.

Archipenko is only a few years past forty and is still growing, creating new things like his sculpto-paintings which he is the first to do. We do not know what his next goddess will be, but she will not be cubistic, for Archipenko has discovered the beauty of the sensual.

Constantin Brancusi, French sculptor, is a sexual symbolist, who uses the egg as a motif. The egg, the eternal feminine in symbolism, is a fetish with him. He builds his abstract fantasies from the oval, using the same motifs for the heads and even the eyes. Occasionally he does strange phallic things.

In his sexual symbolism he is comparable to the sculptors of India, as frank as the Congo artists, but in a different way. The Indian philosophers in their meditation saw the organs of sex as creative and interpreted their gods with sculpturings of the actual creative organs, a symbolism slightly different from that of the Egyptians who symbolized the organs themselves. The sculpture of India with its elaborate flowering of sex came into European sculpture as had that of the Congo, with the religious viewpoint neglected for the surface appearance.

Brancusi's abstractions have had their points of vaguity

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even in this age. There was the now famous dispute in the winter of 1926-27 with the United States custom officials as to the "art" value of his "Bird in Flight." There was his "Princess Bonaparte," not vague enough to the Paris police, taken out of a Paris display for its resemblance to a phallus, though for Brancusi it was merely an abstract torso and head. It was safely exhibited both in New York and Chicago, however, where officials were not up on their genetics.

Brancusi, one of the best contemporary masters of abstract beauty, like Archipenko, can do other things when he wants to. He has done one particularly exquisite piece in the realm of the natural. It is a modern version of the beauty of Venus Callipyge, a magnificent pair of loins, called "Tors Onix," a little gem that could easily have come out of archaic Greece where the artists regarded themselves as the first connoisseurs in that sort of beauty.

William Lehmbruck has sculptured female nudes, handsome elongated creatures but different from Archipenko's. They are in the German tradition with a Cranach sort of abdomen. Lehmbruck began with the stocky Maillol nudes but turned to the other extreme with his long graceful creatures reminiscent of Donatello and of Rizzo's voluptuous Venetian beauties.

George Kolbe, as prolific a German almost as Rodin was a Frenchman, is one of the few sculptors who have done adolescents and done them successfully. He is also one of the very few who have done men as graceful figures. Several of his nudes are in the Maillol Amazon formula, but more slender and naturalistic. His men, best typified by his "Adam" and "Lucino," are Egyptian-negroids, poles apart from Epstein's, with broad shoulders that overshadow the slimness of the rest of the figure, full-developed stocky legs and a formal woodeness like the Egyptian Pharaohs and their queens. His "Assunta," the feminine foil for his "Adam," has the square shoulders of

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a man, rather than the sloping ones of a woman. She is elongated, but not enough to detract from her naturalism.

A relief of his, done in 1913, of seven lovely nudes, is more natural than classic and very passionate. In his dancers he gives us plenty of action. A "Head of a Dancer," an earlier work, suggests the Rodin subtleties of modeling.

Paul Landowski, Polish-Frenchman, has a Kolbe touch, but more the frank naturalism of Bartholomé and of the early Rodin, and something of the mystic.

Another German, Rudolph Belling, has taken athletic men for his gods, though he has done some primitive sexy things of women. He is the Myron of modern times. An experimenter like Archipenko, he has come from Cubism to Naturalism. His most successful athlete is the well-known figure of the prize fighter Schmeling, not cubistic, and one of the best representations of an athlete done in modern days.

Mateo Inurria, Spanish sculptor, is officially a monumentalist but he has done other works which reveal his passionate attachment to the ideal beauty of pure form—in woman. The "Eternal Idol," a version of the Sphinx, "Forma," an exquisite female torso in rose marble, and "La Parra," a lovely full length figure in black marble, from which the torso is derived, are tributes to the cult of feminism by this sculptor.

The ascendancy of the female nude in modern sculpture is not even threatened. Until some new god of sculpture nurtures a more powerful culture of male or inorganic forms, modern sculpture, in its most effective aspect, will still bow to the most beautiful of forms, that of the woman, and to sex in her.

Chapter Sixteen

THE MEANING OF CLOTHES

by HERBERT SANBORN

ONE of the popular questions of the hour concerns the style of woman's dress. For woman herself this may well have furnished themes of perennial interest far beyond the ken of psychologist and philosopher; but for the latter, too, the general problem of clothing has been a puzzling subject of reflection ever since it was first brought forward by the original sansculottism and attendant architectural revolt of Diogenes. At the present moment it may have for them a more especial attraction, inasmuch as the short skirt and the short hair of our insurgent generation have come to be confidently linked by reformers with certain other alleged shortcomings, said to have developed *pari passu*. Proceeding on the usual assumption of the orthodox that clothing and modesty stand in one-to-one correspondence, it would be indeed easy to arrive at the conclusion that the recent shortening of the skirt is the explanation of an alleged moral turpitude, or vice versa—an opinion widely held by the man in the street.

If we may credit newspaper reports, this view of the matter has been the ground for attempted regulation of dress and head-dress of some American school-teachers and of employees in certain American business houses, as

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well as the theme for occasional sermons from the pulpit concerning the "sacredness of the body"; women have even been forbidden to enter certain churches unless attired to suit the regulations of those in charge. Moreover, we are informed that far from any influence of Puritanism, near the region where Spartan youths without moral jeopardy wrestled naked with naked Spartan girls and Greeks in general were lightly clad, the maid of Athens has had the proper length of her skirt prescribed for her by some modern Draco. On the other hand, however, it is not unworthy of mention in passing—*audiatur et altera pars*—that counter-reformers in Europe, reacting against what they call effete civilization, are seriously developing cults for the abolition of clothing altogether except for outdoor protection against the weather. Apparently there is a clothing problem that is not settled and will hardly be settled by the present article.

The view that clothing is a sign of modesty is at least as old as the ancient account of the predicament of our first parents, which is in fact paralleled by the traditions in certain Indian tribes of a period when no clothing was worn by their ancestors. Such accounts seem to suggest that the feeling of shame is an acquired characteristic; but together with other data they at any rate bear witness to the fact that man has long wondered why he began to wear clothes. As a result of such speculation, especially in recent times, attempts have been made to find some plausible explanation for the custom that shall rest on a basis of scientific fact. When we turn, however, to the conclusions drawn from a consideration of the data furnished by anthropological research, we find here as elsewhere divergent and even antithetical interpretations.

The observation that savages who are practically nude are nevertheless decent in their behaviour¹ has brought cer-

¹ Kerr Cross is authority for the statement that "as a general rule, in Africa, modesty is in reverse proportion to clothing."

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tain anthropologists to the view that clothing originated in the desire to protect the body either from the inclemency of the weather, from thorny bushes and thickets, or from the attacks of human and animal enemies; but those who hold the more orthodox view reply that protection against cold was not necessary in the warm climates where man probably originated; that drawings in the caves of Périgord show that he did not need originally such protection even in a cold climate; and that primitive clothing is inadequate to the purposes alleged, being indeed never regarded as protection by the present wearers. On the contrary, the fact that clothing proper, as distinguished from clothing used for ornament, begins as a covering for the pudenda which remains as the last vestige of clothing with the very lowest declines of civilization is held to be evidence that the impulse to clothe the body is due to a universal native sense of modesty.

Clothing proper, according to this view, is known to every people; and even where reports at first sight seem to indicate that there are races living in a condition of absolute nudity, a closer investigation reveals that a small group of them—usually the married women—have some sort of clothing. Moreover, such races have a latent sense of shame that manifests itself with respect to strangers, even though it may be quiescent within the circle of the tribe itself, just as in civilized life the sense of modesty is stronger in its manifestations toward those outside the family circle than toward members of the same family.

It is further maintained that the close relationship between clothing and sex is revealed most distinctly through the fact that all important events of sex life go regularly hand in hand with change in dress. In the case of most savage tribes clothing is not assumed until the beginning of puberty; and then a distinction is made in the dress of the sexes, prescribed strictly by custom. With the advance of civilization, however, and the advent of marriage this

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stage comes to be considered of less importance, the emphasis being then laid on the distinction through dress of the married and single female members of the group. The psychological significance of clothing thus appears in its symbolization of the married state. With some races the expression, "he gave her a dress," means that a man has married a maiden and not a widow. On the island of Tahiti, furthermore, the chief ceremony in the marriage rite consists in the groom throwing the bride a piece of cloth. With other races the women who has borne a child wears an additional apron. The feeling of modesty is the necessary accompaniment of social organization and develops concomitantly with the development of marriage, that is, with exclusive sexual possession, clothing being the outward sign of this process.

The phenomenon of jealousy in the case of gregarious animals endangers temporarily the very existence of the herd or flock through the violent battles of the males; and if this situation were continued for more than a brief season the herd would be defenceless before its enemies. The fact that for human beings there is no especial mating season would make likewise the existence of human society impossible, unless man in his development had been able to succeed in uniting the gregariousness of the herbivora with the monogamy of the carnivora. The primary cause for the initial stages of clothing is, therefore, the jealousy of the male, who imposes his will upon the woman owned by him. The religious rites used to sanctify marriage might easily seem to precede this, but religious commands are regularly customs already sanctioned by the needs of practical life. It is even possible to admit that clothing may have been used first of all as an adornment or as protection from cold during sleep, and also that the sense of modesty has been subject to a gradual intensification, without committing oneself to the thought that it has been created—even in the case of races living in the tropics—by the use

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of clothing for some other purpose. Modesty in its development extends normally from woman to man, a fact which explains why woman regularly wears more clothing than man even in primitive society. When exceptions to this rule have been advanced, it has been shown that in some races man has simply taken advantage of his superior position to allow woman only the scantier apparel, so that in some cases leaves and foliage constitute her only garb. With the development of civilization the use of clothing gradually extends to other parts of the body; and in the case of these the feeling of modesty may well arise as a secondary phenomenon.

Thus clothing may come to be worn behind instead of in front by tribes living in huts into which they must crawl, and inhabitants of the desert may come to transfer the feeling of modesty to the exposure of the face which was veiled originally to prevent thirst or to ward off the influence of the evil eye. Furthermore, among many degenerate peoples that appear at first sight to be absolutely naked, there are various forms of symbolical clothing, due to poverty, laziness, and negligence. Thus a mere string of leather, cloth, or pearls about the waist or about the breast may symbolize a real garment once worn in the tribe, though the true meaning of the symbol is unknown to the wearer himself. With such symbolization there goes hand in hand in many races the tatooing of the body with designs that simulate the garments in question. Closely allied with this practice we often find oiling and greasing the body, so that it becomes covered with a layer of dirt or ashes that may serve secondarily as a protection against the weather and insects. Even with this poorest of garments there is a differentiation for sex and for various other classifications in the tribe. Painting the body also serves to symbolize the painted clothing common among certain races and is sometimes also resorted to for its medicinal effects.

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In sharpest contrast with this view, which finds in natural shame and modesty the impulse to clothe the body, theory has swung to the diametrically opposite extreme, arriving then at an interpretation which imputes the first wearing of clothing to coquetry or exhibitionism. The genetic basis for this is found in an alleged sexual apathy on the part of the male and a certain coquetry on the part of the female claimed to be practically a universal phenomenon of wild animal life. These are held to be an explanation for the secondary sex characteristics and the courting behavior of some animals, which indeed led Darwin to his famous theory of animal æsthetics and the auxiliary hypotheses of sexual selection. Moreover, the theory attempts to bring these facts into line genetically with the use of ornamentation in savage and civilized life.

The function of jewellery is said to be the attraction of attention to the beautiful hand, arm, or head, rather than to the ornament itself; and this is so much the case that the effect of excessive ornamentation is to defeat its real purpose by holding the attention too exclusively; a large diamond, as Hirn says, prevents the beautiful fingers and hand from being noticed, so that women of taste have a natural repugnance for large rings, stones, bracelets, and earrings. In the case of primitive peoples, accustomed to being naked and with whom clothing, at times at least, is indistinguishable in its function from ornament, it is alleged that the effect of certain articles worn is to call attention emphatically to the pudenda that might otherwise remain unnoticed or at least sexually ineffective.

In order to make themselves agreeable to the opposite sex, men and women paint and tattoo themselves, submitting themselves to many painful operations in order to fasten rings, sticks, shells, pieces of fat meat and other objects into the nose, lips, ears, and the pudenda, the ornamental value of which is alleged to increase with the number and size of the objects worn. Sometimes the teeth

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are knocked out, and sometimes they are blackened, browned, or sharpened, the purpose being, according to some savages, to make the mouth of the possessor as different as possible from that of an animal; and only the possessors of such teeth are considered marriageable. Similarly, painting, dressing, and ornamenting the hair in various ways is said to serve as a sexual stimulant, whereas in many races short hair, especially with women, is—contrary to the tenets of modern reformers—a symbol of chastity. Self-decoration is in many tribes more prevalent with men than with women, a fact which is supposed to parallel the secondary sex characteristics of the male with birds and other animals. The contrast between this situation and that of civilized life of the present day is explained in the theory by the fact that in savage life males predominate, whereas in civilized life the opposite obtains. The intimate relationship between self-decoration and clothes brings about a mutual substitution of function, such that clothes readily become decorations while mere decorations have also developed into clothes. The original use of the pubic covering, which by common consent is the first clothing worn, as a sexual lure is, however, clearly revealed by certain allied practices. Among the Saliras, on the authority of Lohman, only the harlots clothe themselves, while in many of the Pacific islands the pudenda are tattooed and mutilated by subcision and introcision with the same intent. It is claimed that by means of clothing and the coyness of the female, as in the case of mating animals, the natural apathy of the male is overcome, so that tumescence and more complete and abundant secretions of the sexual glands result.

According to other views the original impetus to put on clothing was the desire to protect the body from frost and damp, from the attacks of insects, or from injuries by enemies and objects in the environment. From the fact that in Mohammedan countries the practice of veiling the face

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is to secure protection against the evil eye, it is inferred that the covering of the pudenda with peoples otherwise naked may be due to this same motive. Certain other theories find the original motivation for clothing in the desire to forestall the arousal of a feeling of disgust at certain secretions, which is said to be the only form of modesty among prostitutes today.

Doubtless all these theories of the origin of clothing contain elements of truth; it is only when we take sides with any one of them, as is often done, asserting that it is a full account of the matter, that we become victims of the fallacy of oversimplification. If we, moreover, assume that with primitive man the struggle for mere existence was so keen that his whole life was capable of only practical orientation, we tend quite naturally to explain all his behaviour with reference to ends exclusively practical and to neglect the probable influence of other, more especially æsthetic motives. If we, furthermore, under the general influence of the theory of mechanical evolution come to identify the full present value of anything with its origins, we might easily arrive at the conclusion that the function of clothing originally and at present is merely practical, whether as protection against the elements, against injury by things and enemies of the environment, as a means used by man for ridding himself of the uncomfortable feeling of shame, or as a sexual lure.

We might come eventually, under the influence of our prevailing utilitarianism, to interpret whatever apparent æsthetic value clothing may have at certain epochs as identical in meaning with such practical significance, explaining everything as a development in complexity from the simpler forms, with these in turn mechanically determined on the basis of merely technical exigencies. This is, or rather was until quite recently, the usual methodology of science in all fields, and in anthropology it led to an extreme position, more especially since science was confronted here at

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the beginning with a mass of anecdotal material picked up at random and interpreted without proper controls by untrained travellers and explorers. An earlier misinterpretation of primitive life due to the unhistorical assimilation of primitive behaviour to that of civilized life seems to have been followed by an equally uncritical reduction of civilized life to that which, according to the theory, must have been the condition of primitive culture; and neither of these interpretations is strictly true.

Under the influence of more recent studies in anthropology we are coming to see that the life of the savage is, after all, human and far from being as simple in content as it was once assumed to be. The Colonel's lady, Judy O'Grady, and the belles among our "contemporary ancestors" are doubtless nearly enough related under their skins to cause them to arrange what goes over them according to the same general principles; so that, as Chesterton puts it, "when man has discovered why men in Bond Street wear black hats, he will at the same time have discovered why men in Timbuctoo wear red feathers." One cannot, however, discover a matter like this merely by sending out questionnaires to the men in Bond Street or by interrogating the natives of Timbuctoo through the medium of the best interpreter. It is also not enough to discover the *cause* for doing certain things in either locality, since irrational behaviour is not excluded from either. In order to obtain results of real significance, we must somehow be able to determine what ought to be done in both places.

It is in any case unlikely that the study of any one period of clothing behaviour, whether of the present or of primitive society, will disclose to us the fundamental principles and laws which govern the functions involved. On the contrary, here as elsewhere, we can arrive at a true understanding of the whole matter only by the continuity of an historical investigation which may enable us to compare various clothing epochs in their interrelations and to see in

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perspective the whole development from its origins down to the present day. To attempt to understand the function of clothing whether for man or for woman from an examination of present conditions by means of a statistical treatment of answers to questionnaires, etc., is seen in the light of such historical study to be especially futile; since there is doubtless no period for which the significance of clothing is less in evidence than that of the present and few periods in which the prevailing ideas concerning the object to be clothed were more incorrect. The modern kaleidoscopic succession of fads and fashions should not deceive us in this respect; far from being a sign that we are, in the slang-language of the day, "clothing-minded," they represent for the most part merely a lack of taste in designer or wearer and a failure to recognize an aesthetic problem of which other epochs have been more or less conscious. As a natural result we have fashions and fads but no *styles* in the restricted sense of the word in which it designates a lawful arrangement of clothing material in accordance with its own nature, so that it becomes expressive both of the group mind and of unitary personality and character.

Style, it may be remarked in passing, is historically unique in every realm of art, and inimitable; it depends upon a problematic situation with a general and a particular aspect, the latter of which, contrary to the popular saw, does not repeat itself. The various styles of architecture, for example, represent so many attempts to solve the general problem of reconciling and harmonizing the horizontal and vertical lines of force in any structure, even a dolmen, in connection with specific differences of material, climate, topography, and specific social purposes. Style is realized or created when this harmonization occurs, as in the use of the lintel with the Egyptians and Greeks, of the arch with the Syrians and Romans, the ogive in the Gothic, the dome and pendentive in the Byzantine forms of construction, with architectural style in ferro-concrete still

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æsthetically problematic. The earlier styles mentioned represented the realization and objectification of social purposes in accordance with the laws immanent in the materials employed; but these purposes that brought them into being no longer function vitally in our modern society, and temple and church architecture repeats itself by way of imitation for those who live largely in the forms of a previous age or who find no incongruity in a Gothic or Corinthian Chamber of Commerce Building. The lawless skyscraper, "shouldering its way up through its neighbors," as Bragdon puts it, "stealing their light and air," is certainly not a lovely style; but it undoubtedly symbolizes quite well the insensitive unæsthetic age which brought it into being.

The style of clothing is similarly determined by the purpose of the garment, the laws immanent in the material, and the specific form and sex of the individual to be clothed. Designs in velvet (whose characteristic is to absorb light, making surfaces appear at times darker, duller, and hence smaller than usual) will be governed by a quite different law from satin (whose tendency is in the very opposite direction), precisely as designs in marble or granite must differ stylistically from those in wood or brick. It is a lack of style which permits Greuze to present milkmaids as fine ladies, induces country folk in general to ape city styles, leads social groups differing anatomically and psychologically from the French to adopt Paris fashions indiscriminately, and finally, although no two individuals are anatomically alike, brings about the use of standardized, ready-made clothing of every kind. With much of the clothing referred to, with garments which appear accidentally in the course of history as lawless aberrations of fashion or as articles of merely practical value, the history of clothing, as the history of true clothing styles, is little or not at all concerned.

Within the limits of the strictly historical period, it is

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easy from an examination of various works of art, literature, historical documents, etc., to see that clothing has functioned, practically, as a protection against enemies; as a covering to keep out or ward off disturbing or injurious effects of the environment, such as wind, rain, dust, and filth; and finally as a veil to conceal private parts and to keep in the heat of the body. These three purposes of clothing while distinguishable are not always separable, since it is evident that any developed article of clothing may have all of these functions at one and the same time, especially in the earlier periods when clothing is homogeneous and scanty. Nevertheless, the distinctions are valid and useful when applied to later epochs in which there has come about such a sharp differentiation as is indicated by a steel helmet, the sole of a sandal, and an undershirt. Moreover, one and the same article of clothing may represent in its fully developed forms a synthesis of elements or elementary articles of clothing originally separate in function, as, for example, a modern shoe or boot which presents all three aspects mentioned in the union of the sole (originally a primitive sandal) with the "upper" and the shoe-shank or boot-leg.

The fullest and most typical development of clothing from the point of view of protection against enemies is represented by the panoplies of the mediæval knights. However little we may comprehend today the paradoxical character of the age which brought forth these as well as certain other "protective armour" for the fair in the absence of the brave (apparently more reliable than that furnished even in an age of chivalry and religion by amative and religious vows), we must recognize them as stylish and characteristically individualistic in their artistic expressiveness in a sense hardly so applicable to clothing of other kinds or of other epochs. We often say "encased in armour" to designate the very acme of awkward immobility, lack of expression, lifelessness, and the like, and

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fail to notice that these suits, through the marvellous technique which matched the body of the wearer muscle by muscle and joint for joint, are really expressive of the structure and mobility of the human body to a degree certainly not equalled by the raiment of us moderns who thoughtlessly hackney the phrase. In truth, this essentially Gothic clothing reflects most clearly the spirit which in the virile architecture and interior decoration of the period abolished all obscure, meaningless, merely adorned surfaces in the interest of truly decorative structural forms.

As an example of coverings designed as protection in the second sense indicated, the umbrella or sunshade (known to have been in use at least as early as the Age of Pericles) is doubtless the best representative, to which may be added hats, mantles, collars, goggles, aprons, with socks, stockings, breeches, trousers, etc., in so far as these last named serve to keep out dust and filth from the body. The third class mentioned is made up of undergarments of various kinds whose special purpose is to keep in the natural heat of the organism and to absorb perspiration. This difference of function, which is here as elsewhere a matter of historical development from an original condition of homogeneity, is usually clearly manifested by the sort of material used in the articles of clothing in question.

In its historical development we discover, furthermore, that clothing, far from being the subject of caprice and accident it is regularly considered to be through the popular confusion of style with fashion, is in fact governed by rather definite laws of change, in which important social factors and relationships are plainly involved. As merely one example of such social significance we may note the transference of ornamental clothing from man to woman and in the sequel from the body of the individual to his immediate environment of the household as interior decoration. The first step symbolizes the elevation of woman from a condition of slavery (where she needed only the

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simplest possible working costume) to a position of equality with man, while the second is a sign of the comparative equalization of classes, so far as bodily appearance is concerned, distinctive dress being retained only for certain public officials. More recently, the demand for "equality" of the sexes has been accompanied by a certain equalization of dress, which at the present moment seems to be giving way to a reaction in favour of "charm." Indeed, it is not going too far to assert that the history of society in general (the relationships of classes, of the sexes, the conditions of youth and age) is mirrored quite as clearly in the clothing people have designed and worn—in their clothing behaviour—as in anything else in which they have expressed themselves. Even the deliberate refusal to attempt such expression cannot conceal from the competent observer a characteristic lack of taste, which is the foundation of such negative behaviour. A brief glance at typical instances which may give some insight into the nature of the principles referred to must suffice for our present purpose.

Garments begin regularly in what may be called their embryonic form and increase in length and breadth to a maximum, competing with other articles for the energy of attention, while these latter may dwindle concomitantly in size to the point where they are about to disappear entirely. At this stage a period of reaction regularly begins, in which the general psychic tendency for a given sort of activity to persist comes into conflict with the equally fundamental desire for symmetry and proportion; and the first garment contracts for a time while its rival for sartorial supremacy grows in size if not always in grace. In the course of this competition a state of intercommunity may be reached in which new articles of clothing come into being, while (by a law of æsthetic inertia like that which explains the persistence in stone architecture of forms developed in previous wooden structures) the older garments

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are retained either as such or as parts or elements of some later garment. Thus socks by a natural evolution become stockings and leggings, while these in turn may grow continuing above the knee until we have on the two legs elements which figure in the development first of the open breeches that descend to meet and mingle with them and then of the closed pants.¹ Meanwhile because of this development of the nether garment, the coat contracts in length until there is left of it only a jerkin; and when this contracts in breadth until it becomes intolerably tight it is first slit up the front and laced, then left unlaced, and the undervest comes into its own as a waistcoat. With the exposure of such undergarments, originally white or neutral in tint, they change colour, while (in accordance with the law of inertia) the older garment regularly remains but on the outside with the later garments arranged in layers or strata according to the time of their origin from the outside in toward the skin; the hat-band, for example, is originally the fillet which preceded the hat itself.

Thus there comes about gradually an increase in the number of clothing layers worn, which is independent of climatic conditions, there being no such foundation, for example, in the case of those peoples now living in the regions once occupied by the Greeks and Romans. It is interesting in this connection to note that woman, who, according to popular opinion, is mainly responsible for the rapid and meaningless changes of present "styles," appears in the light of historical research regularly as a conservative, with man as the real innovator.² As a result of her

¹ The historical situation is commemorated here by the plural form of the word, as in "breeches" which still persists for the attire of both sexes in the dialect of the common people and in German *Beinkleider*. In the case of "breeches" we have indeed a double pluralization, since Anglo-Saxon *brēc* with the same meaning was already the plural of *brōc*. *Pantaloons* was singular originally, as in French today.

² As a matter of fact, it is probable that even today men design the "styles" which women of prominence merely introduce.

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innate conservatism woman tends, or until quite recently tended, to retain garments worn in previous periods to such an extent that the whole history of clothing may be read layer after layer, proceeding from the outer gown which is really only a transformed tunic to the only recently discarded open drawers. These latter descendants of the split breeches—one of the latest garments developed—could be retained by woman in something like their original form, inasmuch as the development into their closed form for reasons of modesty, which became operative in the case of man with the shortening of the coat, was not in the case of woman imperative. It is interesting to observe that the change brought about here recently with the shortening of the skirt has resulted in a garment somewhat similar in form to the trunk-hose which in the case of man followed the discarding of the open breeches.

According to all accounts, even that of our first parents, the earliest article of clothing worn by both sexes was some form of codpiece or apron, which extended gradually upward over the breast, until it had to be supported by suspenders over the shoulders, and downward over the hips and thighs until it at length reached the feet. This evolution which took place with different peoples under various conditions of climate is complete in the collarless, sleeveless coat, whether as great coat, or in later contractions, as shirt, skirt, and petticoat. Before the development of special clothing for legs and arms (a stage which some peoples never passed through) garments of this sort constituted the only thigh and leg clothing for both sexes. Mantles and togas of various kinds came soon to be added for arm and shoulder clothing, but with the development of sleeves from lengthened mittens and gloves and that of breeches as above described, modifications of the original coat were inaugurated which ended, in the case of man, with sleeves joined to his coats, in the case of more con-

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servative woman, in the still unsettled oscillation between gowns with and without sleeves, long and short gloves.

The knee-pant or culotte for man was abolished in the levelling process of the French Revolution which ushered in the modern period of utilitarian democratic clothing with the adoption of pantaloons: these had previously been worn in antiquity by Persians and other non-classical peoples but had been in the period preceding 1789 the peculiar property of theatre clowns.¹ Apart from this there remained as alleged ornamental garb for man the dress-suit which was designed by some of the courtesans surrounding Louis XV. Woman's conservatism, however, enabled her to weather the stormy blasts of sanscullotism, from which she has continued to protect herself until quite recently by the time-honoured undivided breeches as petticoat over the open breeches as pantalette.

In the modern period of eroticism in literature and art, feminine attire has been concerned chiefly with the lower half of the body, the mystery and mysticism of which have probably been augmented and accentuated by the steadily increasing number of layers underneath the gown or original tunic, whereas masculine clothing during the same period has laid emphasis on the body above the waist. Finally clothing for women came to be definitely divided into an upper and nether garment from utilitarian considerations and especially through the modern overemphasis on the waist-line for the purpose of voluptuous accentuation of hips, buttocks, and breasts; and when these become reinforced in their combined sex appeal by the use of the bustle and by high heels whose function (as the author of *Penguin Island* assured us) is to call emphatic attention to the feminine abdomen, modern woman's clothing becomes

¹ *Panteleon*, all-lion, was a Greek personal name used later in Venice both as an ordinary personal name and as the name of a saint. From this word was derived the Italian "pantalone," meaning a ridiculous character or buffoon.

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as purely practical as that of modern man, but with a somewhat different end in view.

Modern masculine clothing is practical in the sense that the labourer's costume throughout the ages has been designed so as to insure ease and speed in dressing and undressing and to avoid encumbrance and hindrance in various tasks; and since the industrial revolution all men alike wear the garb of the travelling salesman. It has even been argued with some plausibility that what is called the "backwardness" of Oriental nations in the present age of industrialism has been to no small extent due to their impractical clothing. However that may be, and apart from all the practical aims of clothing already discussed, there is a genuine clothing problem, which is more frequently overlooked today than in many previous periods of history.

The association of individuals in society involves their mutual adjustment in accordance with social aims which we call living in the pregnant sense of the word; and such adjustment involves to a greater or less extent mutual self-revelation. We reveal ourselves to each other through all the senses, probably unconsciously more often than consciously, but more especially through hearing and sight. In a period when the body is fully clothed, individuals express themselves to the vision of their fellows chiefly through the face and hands; but in a period when little clothing was worn it is plain that the whole organism was involved harmoniously in such expression, as in nude painting and sculpture.

The most realistic or rather naturalistic solution of the problem to dress or not to dress would be that of the nudist cults mentioned at the beginning of this article and plausible arguments could doubtless be advanced to show that just such a return to nature would result in untold physical and social betterment.¹ Meanwhile, however, the

¹ It has been argued seriously that the recent tendency to exposure of leg and head is a symptom of an evolution which may proceed to complete

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actual problem facing us is how to clothe the body and still reveal it—the problem with which the sculptor of the draped body has always wrestled—to which is added the further question whether the clothing shall reveal only a body and then naturalistically with all the defects which nearly every modern body possesses, or indeed idealistically. If the apparel is to proclaim the man, the question at once arises whether this means the entire man or merely an abstract commercial unit, and also whether clothing is not essential to the expression of the whole civilized man just as mimicry and language are. For back of our general ideas about clothing, as everywhere else, in fact, lie more fundamental theoretical considerations.

For the purposes of mere industrialism in which individuals are only so many homogeneous standardized units to be lumped together in mass statistics the answer, as already indicated, is comparatively simple: it is important merely to announce to one another our compresence in the cloth, stripped of all irrelevant individuality, distinctions, and even, like the turtle of the current limerick, of important sex differences. To the extent, however, that civilization is something more than statistics, not nature but art, an emphasis on just such neglected differentiation should make for a richness of content essential to genuine culture. A hint for the solution of this phase of the problem comes to us from the practice of realistic Greek sculptors who are said to have combined harmoniously in their typical masterpieces elements taken from many natural models; but until the programs of eugenic societies are so completely realizable that everybody may be as well-born as a race-horse, our only resource is the judicious and artistic use of truly ornamental clothing as distinguished both from mere barbaric adornment and from an equally

nudity in which, in addition to the benefit to be derived from ultra-violet rays, an opportunity will be offered for a better selection of mates leading eventually to the development of physically higher types of humanity.

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barbaric form of dress which, in the Minoan and modern periods, both deformed the body and perverted taste with respect to the ideal of corporeal beauty.

It is important in this connection to distinguish carefully two meanings of the word "ornament," which may be differentiated for technical use at least by the words "decoration" or ornament proper and "ornament" as mere adornment. The first kind of ornament, which alone is involved in real style, consists in the incorporation of features and aspects in a work of art in such manner that the purpose and principles of the given structure, plan, movement, rhythm, etc., are emphasized and thereby rendered more evident and effective. Thus vertical fluting helps to accentuate the vertical thrust of a pillar and its supporting function, while the volutes give it greater elasticity. Similarly grace notes in some musical compositions (Mozart) may enrich, clarify, and complete the theme, so that they become an indispensable part of the work, whose natural and otherwise unavoidable defects they ameliorate or obliterate. This is true functional ornament, or, let us say, "decoration." In the second place, however, elements may be superadded to a work of art as mere appendages which may obscure, weaken, and even destroy the effect of the original plan. A continuous spiral fluting on a Doric pillar, or carving on the surface of a table, would have this effect, just as grace notes in many pieces of music are prejudicial æsthetically. Moreover, the two kinds of ornament are mutually exclusive; like a lily or a rose, a properly decorated work of art rejects "adornment," which appears historically only when a given style has run its course and become degenerate, as in the barbaric extravagances of the baroque. When, now, we speak of clothing as ornament it is meant only in the first of the meanings here discussed.

The cause for rejecting ornamental clothing in the sense of "decoration" seems to reside in a somewhat demure and perhaps vulgar interpretation of sincerity joined with a

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certain lack of æsthetic sensitivity; for there is doubtless no good reason why all the unsightly physical defects and imperfections of any individual should be inflicted in all their crudity upon his neighbours, even though he himself, like Cromwell with his precious mole, may have no desire to please himself with his attire; the alternative to naturalistic dress is not foppery or any attempt to modify the body by means of distortion. No deceit is, of course, involved in an improvement of the natural condition of the body æsthetically any more than is the case with any other form of art, since in such dress there is no necessary appeal to special instincts through the emphasis on certain parts of the body in abstraction and isolation from the organic whole, such as is found in the utilitarian clothing already referred to. On the contrary, there is in developed clothing a subordination of all bodily aspects to the expression of unified personality, which exemplifies the attitude of legitimate "moral semblance," in which alone, as Schiller thought, man becomes so truly human that he can contemplate a human being as a work of art. The significance of clothing in its strictly decorative aspect is revealed by a consideration of certain well-known psychic facts, as well as from an examination of bodily ornamentation in its historical development.

The most significant contribution of psychology to the solution of the problem of clothing is the discovery of empathy, which was first noticed by Kant and Schiller and later investigated in the field of modern æsthetics by Lotze, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, Lipps, Volkelt, and others. There are many subtle aspects of the current doctrine which do not concern us here, where we are more especially interested in certain of the typical facts in their immediate bearing on our general question; the facts themselves are for the most part well known and need only to be pointed out and interpreted.

When we cut a piece of meat with a knife or touch any

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object with a cane or stick of any length we seem to be immediately present at the cutting edge or point of the knife or at the end of the cane or stick; in other words, there is an extension or projection of self to the point where these *detachable* tools come into contact with some other object. When I write with the pen, furthermore, *I* write, but, if I stick it accidentally into the paper, *it* sputters. So long as everything goes well *I* drive the auto, but *it* fails to take the turn, hits the rock, or goes over the embankment. We identify ourselves, that is, with these detachable tools just as we have already done with such non-detachable tools as our arms, legs, hands, feet, and other parts of what we call our bodies, so long as they are in our control or completely subject to our will.

Now in the case of clothing something precisely similar is readily observable. We identify ourselves with our clothing in an even more intimate manner than in the case of our detachable tools, and almost as intimately at times as we do with our own bodies, experiencing then either enhancement and refinement of self-feeling or the reverse. Children, for the sake of this enhancement of self-feeling, "dress up" in the attire of grown-ups and sometimes tie onto themselves a tail which they drag along the ground or wave in the air behind them, in precisely the same spirit which gave birth to the long trains of earlier gowns for both men and women. Head-dress and foot-wear with heels not so high as to endanger stability give us a satisfying sense of increased extension in the vertical, and short men and women have always taken a keen delight in both. With the movements of the head to and fro we experience an extension of our self into the very top of the high hat, as with the cane which we carry or swing and with which we may touch various objects beyond our normal reach. It is this same enhancement of power, making us superior in speed to the swiftest fleeing animal, which, together with a certain barbaric insensibility, explains the passion for

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shooting panic-stricken fleeing animals and also the "speed mania" of the "joy-rider."

The greater or lesser tension of our clothing is felt as though it were a quality of our very selves, so that the wearer of armour assumes the qualities of the metallic suit. On the other hand, veils, and light delicate fabrics worn by women develop in them corresponding moods which modify behaviour. Tassels, ribbons, and other fluttering forms of bodily decoration give a delightful experience of being in rapid succession at many points of space, making doubtless for a certain animation and vivacity in the wearer; and all of these are paralleled by equivalent modifications of consciousness in the observer.¹

Clothing in its æsthetic aspect is thus seen to be a kind of language (the elements of which with the single exception of hair have all been borrowed from the world external to the human body, with even hair at times altered by clipping, painting, and dyeing) in which we reveal ourselves in a subtle manner both to ourselves and to others. Like the expressive mimicry of the human face, it may symbolize the general frame of mind of the wearer, differing from other forms of language chiefly through the fact of its universality or identity of meaning, which is conditioned structurally by the identity of the human form. For while other forms of communication are inventions that vary from region to region, decorative clothing is a discovery, characterized in the midst of manifold appearances by changeless law.

In a long trailing robe or gown, for example, a person cannot run or move about quickly, and hence this sort of garment everywhere in the world means dignity of gait and bearing for both wearer and observer. When the

¹ In this connection it is interesting to recall a famous story told of George Sand. It is related that she once had the general colour tone of the interior decoration of her drawing-room changed from blue to a certain shade of red and that the conversations held, under the influence of the changed environment, became more animated and brilliant than before the change.

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Roman senator chose the long flowing toga, the more agile Spanish woman her fluttering ribbons and laces, the American Indian the pinions of the eagle, and the Persian the broad, tightly fitting girdle, choice in all these cases was not a matter of chance but was conditioned by an inner necessity. Not all symbolical articles of clothing are, however, ornamentation in the strict sense of the term, in which it refers only to the expression of qualities favourable to the one adorned; but they all have a meaning. Thus a high, stiff military collar hinders the natural movements of the neck and is a symbol of extreme stiffness and reserve, the rigidity of military discipline; it is not a decorative ornament, whereas a large, soft collar may indeed be one.

The clue to all decorative clothing lies, as has already been suggested, in an attentive examination of the human figure, the upright position of which almost exclusively conditions the form of its ornamentation. In contrast with that of other mammals, the body of man is characterized by two directions, the line of the vertical and (in its forward motion) that of the horizontal; and these furnish the conditions for the two classes of pendant-ornament and direction ornament. The former kind of decoration should always be not rigid but mobile, so that it may adjust itself readily to the true vertical; thus earrings, symbolizing the direction of gravity, must be as mobile as possible in order to represent continually this direction in contrast with the delicately curved lines of throat or neck which manifest their freedom and independence of the strict vertical.¹ A necklace large enough to hang down loosely on the breast is a pendant-ornament which enhances at one and the same time the perception of the erect position and the sense of movement and life in the wearer and for the observer, in so far as the movements of breathing become thereby

¹ Motionless earrings are not pendant-ornaments but the limiting line of the coiffure to which they belong.

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accentuated. Necklaces and girdles when worn loosely as pendant-ornaments give a sense of slenderness to the form of the wearer. The æsthetic value of heavy pendant-ornament is enhanced through the fact that it influences the behaviour of the wearer by preventing him from making hasty movements, thus putting on him the stamp of dignity.¹ In the case of the body in motion, for example in the dance, pendant-ornament serves to emphasize the various positions assumed, and shawls, ribbons, and fluffy fabrics in general give the danseuse opportunity for manifold pendant arrangements. A danseuse in a tightly fitting jersey would be at a great disadvantage and in fact ridiculous.

Almost any form of pendant-ornament becomes also direction-ornament when the body is in motion. Ribbons and fringes on any article of clothing are typical examples. There are, however, articles, like the crest of the helmet, and the feathers in the head-dress of the Indian which function chiefly as direction-ornament, although both of these also belong to what is called augmentative ornament, or ornament which serves to accentuate the size of any portion of the body, so as to prevent a lack of harmony in the general appearance of the individual. To this latter class belong the high or the broad-brimmed hat, broad shoulder-collars, epaulettes, ladies' trains, various forms of hair-dressing and the full beard, which in most cases lends dignity to the wearer.

Another kind of ornament, called ring-ornament, is due to the shape of various parts of the body. Besides calling emphatic attention to these it has also the æsthetic func-

¹ The effect of heavy symmetrical pendant-ornament is relative immobility and in the case of Malay brides (one of whom is said to have been so loaded down with ornaments that she was forced to remain practically motionless for two weeks) it symbolizes the absolute subordination to the will of the husband. The Japanese kimono, which allows the wearer merely to toddle about, possesses a similar meaning, and with the development in Japan of sex equality may be expected to be modified in the direction of greater mobility.

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tion of bringing them to completer expressiveness. One type of such ornament, which might be called "structural" in order to distinguish it from a more specifically functional kind, consists of stiff rings for those parts of the body (arm, head, legs) that change their shape little or not at all during the movement of the wearer. In contrast with the linked or chain rings, worn on ankles, wrists, and neck (the tight-fitting as distinguished from the pendant loose necklace), which express the mobility of those parts, this structural ring-ornament serves to symbolize the shape. By way of empathy, it also tends to evoke the expansive life of the muscular parts of the body, and in the case of the head, to call emphatic attention to its form and significance and to the colour of the hair. The æsthetic function of the closely fitting girdle is to give the wearer a sense of greater strength, while emphasizing the mobility of the upper half of the body in contrast with the rigidity of the hips, but the girdle gets its fuller meaning only with the completely clothed body. Inasmuch as the function of such ornament is to augment the appearance of the parts involved, it is evidently to be avoided for bodies or parts of bodies that are already disproportionately large. Thus girdles and ring-ornament in general augment the appearance of corpulence or of large hands, feet, etc., which may be improved æsthetically in the direction of greater slenderness by the use of loose flowing garments, laces, veils, nets, loose gloves and the like.

In addition to these we may distinguish colour ornamentation produced by gems and stones, by real flowers in the hair or on the dress, by coloured cloth, etc.; these likewise call attention to the parts of the body which they may enhance æsthetically by enriching or toning favourably the natural colour of the skin according to the psychological principles of colour contrast and colour harmony. In general, light, brilliant colours enlarge, while dark, dull tints diminish the apparent size of the parts which they

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clothe. Thus a black hat trimmed with green will give to a sallow complexion a rich, live flesh colour through the complementary colours of the after-imagery, while light-coloured tight gloves increase the apparent size of hands already disproportionately large. Various materials, such as silk, plush, lace, or gold brocade, have also their specific æsthetic significance. Sometimes ornamentation has a chiefly physical, sometimes a pronounced spiritual significance, as when the crown draws attention to the head, while signifying mental and social power. All kinds of ornamentation described illustrate the general principles involved in any complete clothing design, and furnish together with our anatomical knowledge the only adequate basis for criticism at any epoch. In any case it is doubtless much easier to say what clothing should not be—that is, to point out the most obvious defects of actual costumes—than to say precisely just what it ought to be in concrete cases, especially for modern man; but this is the situation with respect to every art.

The most manifest general fault of modern clothing is that of standardization to which reference has already been made, and which is largely due to the machine methods of modern industrialism and the strictly modern development of the “clothing business.” So long as clothing was designed and made by hand, for the most part by women, the dress of both sexes possessed individuality and more or less æsthetic expressiveness. With the advent of standardized methods of mass production both of cloth and of clothing, the tendency of dress for both sexes has been steadily in the direction of the ugly and bizarre, although until quite recently the common utilitarian trend was resisted by feminine attire with characteristic conservatism. Woman’s recent “emancipation,” whether for good or ill, has changed this appreciably, and her present status is clearly symbolized in her utilitarian costume, which permits her greater freedom of movement than ever before. Doubt-

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less nothing moral has been lost by the abandonment of the long trailing street dress, not to mention the corset, the hoop-skirt, bustle, leg of mutton sleeves, and other contraptions, while much has been gained from the point of view of hygiene; but, apart from these and the problem of how much exposure of the body is moral or decent, it is questionable whether, with some gain, there has not also been lost in the newer costumes much of the charm that went with the womanhood of an earlier age. Equalitarianism levels up and it levels down; and nowhere is the levelling-down process more apparent today than in woman's walking, in so far as woman or anybody else still pretends to walk.

Walking even at its best is a kind of falling. Granted that the antecedent problem of balancing the body on the feet has already been solved by the child, with whom it appears as a genuine problem, walking is composed of the antitheses of first falling forward and downward the length of the body and then of regaining position for another fall forward by pushing the advanced leg against the ground. An even more awkward form of walking than that which one actually sees under the conditions of most modern clothing would consist in first falling flat on one's face the full length of the body, then drawing the body forward caterpillarwise to the point of farthest advance, then erecting it at that point for the next tumble, and so onward *ad libitum*. The less awkward solutions of this problem consist in some unification of the force of gravity in the falling body with the muscular force of the advanced leg into a resultant more or less graceful falling and rising wave-line traced by the head and shoulders of the individual as he moves forward. The awkwardness of this falling-rising movement, which is especially manifest in the nether portion of the body, is softened and obliterated by the graceful folds of long dresses in motion, so that one of the most noteworthy characteristics of earlier woman as

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distinguished from her consort was her gait—*vestis defluxit ad imos pedes et incessu vera dea patuit*, as the great Latin poet has phrased it once for all.

The chief æsthetic objection to the overshort skirt, especially in connection with the high heels which result in the “monkey-knee,” is the fact that it makes woman’s gait even inferior æsthetically to that of modern man in his narrowest trousers; in addition to this it makes even a “daughter of the gods” appear short of stature. Even more questionable is the substitution of coloured underwear for white, because of the short skirt and on account of the time and cost for maintaining that immaculate cleanliness, which has been, so far as the opposite sex is concerned, one of woman’s most fundamental and most attractive characteristics. If Victor Rydberg, in *Det Sköna och dess Lagar*, is correct in his surmise that the prolonged substitution of coloured table linen for white will finally bring about specific undesirable changes of character in individuals and in nations, it is probable that something similar might hold here. A similar loss æsthetically appears in woman’s surrender on utilitarian grounds of the natural ornamentation of the head.

Because of the time, reflection, and especially taste required for arranging what used to be called “woman’s crowning glory” in many truly beautiful forms which obviated the unpleasant spectacle of many heads and necks needlessly ugly today, the bobbing of the hair came as a natural result of the feminist movement, that gave women leisure for other things that seem to the age more important. A similar standardization has given us with men in America the uniformly hairless, effeminate face (common to many periods in which there is an approach to equalitarianism) regardless of the fact that it is becoming only to a minority of boyish countenances. The explanation usually given for this, namely, the lack of sufficient time necessary for keeping the beard and moustache clean and in

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order—although shaving doubtless consumes much more time—is doubtless only an excuse or rationalization. The phenomenon is much better accounted for as a result common to many periods of “petticoat rule,” such as the reign of Charles VI, the latter part of that of Louis XIV in France, and that of Charles II in England, and of Philip II in Spain, when an approach to masculine attire on the part of the women was paralleled by the adoption of effeminate garb in the case of men and the complete disappearance of the beard. Certainly nobody would advocate any return to the unsanitary, unkempt condition of many faces of the “pre-safety” period; but the æsthetic fact remains to be reckoned with to some extent that the unpleasant effect of the “hatchet face” so common in America is removed or favourably modified by the horizontal line of the moustache, while a full beard properly cared for would lend some dignity and character to many a chubby countenance that it is difficult otherwise to take more seriously than does the owner himself. Possibly, in accordance with the current doctrine of empathy above discussed, such clothing behaviour might tend to remove some of the boyishness, not to say childishness, from the actions of our “leaders.”

In general the division of clothing into upper and nether garments on utilitarian grounds, apart from what may be called “sexual levelling,” has given rise in modern times to many horizontal lines which are quite anti-structural and especially ugly for those individuals given to *embonpoint*. Instead of robing the body so as to express its freedom of movement, stress has come to be laid on the tight-fitting garment which leaves little to the imagination; and, in the case of masculine attire at least, colour is almost entirely sacrificed to form. Moreover, instead of an harmonious expression of the organic unity and freedom of the whole body, only certain of the less beautiful portions, such as hips, breasts, abdomen, and posterior are emphasized in

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isolation from the rest, especially in feminine attire. Unquestionably the clothing of woman should express clearly her sex differentiation of structure and partly at least for the attraction of the opposite sex; but *das Ewig-Weibliche*, which for Goethe is the chief motivation for humanity in its endless struggle toward civilization and culture, is certainly not adequately expressed by such merely practical emphasis, with a corresponding neglect of the head. The line is drawn by good taste somewhere between mere prudery and a display approximating to that of the prostitute.

Feminine clothing in æsthetic periods has usually emphasized dress for the posterior portion of the body in the form of trains or long trailing dresses which modify æsthetically the emphatic anatomical contrast of modern woman with man, much as a full beard improves certain too chubby faces; practical modern feminine costume has, however, even ventured to accentuate voluptuously and unæsthetically the natural difference in question by means of bustles, or thin, clinging, and tight-fitting garments, while man has sometimes succeeded in producing the same result by means of the tightly belted coat or by means of the short-tailed coat in connection with tight trousers. Man's dress has usually emphasized the front of the body, producing then (as in the case of the crested helmet) the appearance of initiative and aggressiveness, supposed to be masculine prerogatives. In masculine attire of the present, great æsthetic improvement would doubtless result from the general adoption of the knee-pant for social occasions of all kinds, as has been done already for court functions in Europe.

So far as anatomy is involved in the present discussion, attention has often been called to the fact that classical statuary regularly presents us with structurally different figures from those we find in modern times, especially in the case of woman. The breasts and busts are smaller in size, the hips are far from being as wide, the legs touch

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each other all along the line of their inner margins when brought together, and above all there is no waistline whatever. On the contrary, at the place where modern taste looks for a definite division of the body into upper and lower parts, we find rather in ancient sculpture a certain widening due to developed musculature of the lower chest and abdomen involved among other things in proper breathing. This striking disparity was formerly explained by the assertion that we have here to do with a racial type different from our own, plus the further contention that the sculptor has idealized his figures, both of which statements are measurably true. Since the fundamental work of Schulze-Naumburg, however (which stood for a time at least in opposition to the uncritical opinion of many medical authorities and even artists familiar only with modern bodies), we know with certainty that the modern taste for wide hips, for the waist-line, and especially for enormous busts is a degenerate one, due especially to the wearing of corsets since the last days of the Roman Empire¹ for the purely practical purpose of sex appeal; and it may be that we have here the only psychological foundation for the exhibitionist theory of clothing mentioned at the beginning of this discussion.

Medical men had even come to the support of the view, now definitely refuted by the author in question, by asserting that what we now recognize as defects and deformities are natural sex modifications favourable to the functions of child-bearing, nursing, breathing, etc., whereas we now have definite anatomical proof that the overwide hips are caused by malformation of the head of the femur, due in some cases to rickets, which results in separation and spreading of the legs and in extreme cases in bow-leggedness.

¹ A similar perverted task for the "wasp-waist" with both man and woman, produced apparently by the use of the corset and bustle, prevailed in the period of Cretan civilization.

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It has also been shown that the large cushions of fat on the thighs of grown women are a result of constriction with consequent atrophy of other portions of the musculature of the body where a portion of this fat would otherwise be deposited and a better distribution insured. Similar anatomical proofs are at hand to show that the exaggerated buttocks, protruding abdomen, and tiny feet with which we have been favoured in modern times are due to a perverted taste and malpractice in dress quite comparable to that which has given us the deformed feet for Chinese women and the deformed head for certain Indian tribes. Moreover, the predominance of women with short legs, for which there is not the slightest functional necessity or æsthetic justification, is similarly responsible for the acceptance of this in many quarters as the norm; and works of modern sculpture dominated by the prevailing taste have actually perpetuated all the defects mentioned. It has been observed, on the other hand, that the figures of modern women who have never worn corsets approximate rather closely to the classical ideal.

In the light of this epoch-making investigation, upon which any rational program for æsthetic improvement in clothing design must certainly rest, it is plain that the division of clothing into upper and nether garments; the support of garments from the waist rather than from the shoulders and secondarily from the hips; or the use of any sort of constriction about the respiratory region of the lower chest and abdomen are structurally false. It seems that the form of both man and woman alike has been supposed to be representable schematically by a series of three inverted isosceles triangles with the bases marking the top of the head, the line of the shoulders, and the line of the hips respectively; but this arrangement is chaotic and fails to realize the essential organic unity of the structure involved. Without taking it too strictly, a better schematization as a

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foundation for decorative clothing would be for man and woman single isosceles triangles resting respectively on the apex and on the base. At any rate, before any progress can be made toward the development of proper decorative clothing it is necessary for society in general to be educated with respect to the normal form of the structure to be decorated. So long, however, as designs in clothing continue to be determined solely by commercial motives and by mere fiat from so-called centres of fashion there will doubtless be little real improvement.

Under the impulse to adorn the body originally more and more clothing came to be worn and thus developed into money or became the sign of the achievements of the wearer in the various occupations of life, that is, wealth. In connection with this arise many customs later not understood, such as the removal of clothing in the presence of a superior, the meaning being that the inferior (slave or subject) must not in any way conceal himself or his possessions from his master; the master or potentate, on the other hand, retains all his clothing or is concealed behind a screen, or the subject is required to prostrate himself with his face to the ground and must not look directly at his superior. Entire primitive tribes today are in this condition with respect to the members of other superior tribes. Out of this grew the historical practice of secluding puppet kings. As a development of this custom of removing all the clothing there came later a merely symbolical removal of certain garments. Articles such as shoes or the head-dress are taken off, from which has come our present custom of removing the hat in greeting a person (found also among those tribes in Africa that wear head-dress), and even the décolleté gown, which was first worn on solemn state occasions. With increase in the number of ornaments possessed and the consequent physical inability to wear all of them at once, there comes a transference of ornament to the immediate environment, that is, to the dwelling

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room of the owner;¹ and thus arise the earlier forms of interior decoration, together with the decorative treatment of the utensils of industrial art.

The development of interior decoration proceeds like everything else from a condition of homogeneity to a heterogeneity which has become in modern times so chaotic that one writer on interior decoration even finds that "people are indeed rare that are adequately expressed by any one period, and the growing tendency is to ignore the exactly reproduced period and to accept, adopt and use objects from related periods to express a mixed national life." This counsel of ignorance or despair is, however, very far from being the frame of mind, the aesthetic sensibility, from which style in general and especially in interior decoration emerges. On the contrary, if we proceed from the idea that every room in a house has some specific purpose, any adequate realization of this will surely give us the very opposite of such chaotic, "crazy-quilt," *purposeless* interiors. This becomes in fact plain enough when we consider Gothic rooms, every one of which was dedicated to some special purpose, with almost all the furniture built in and with windows and doors connected with ceiling, floor, and walls as organic elements of the whole. From that sort of functional interior decoration we have come little by little to the situation above described, with movable, ready-made furniture constructed to fit any room and with rooms made to fit anybody and almost any purpose indifferently. The symbol of this condition is the so-called "living-room" (the successor to the stiff formal parlor with its baroque trinkets) which should probably be considered as the reception-room for wife and mother with her assembled family and decorated accordingly, but which, in accordance with its general name, is quite regularly devoted

¹ With the troglodytes of the Dordogne we find interior decoration, already in the developed form of painting on the walls of their cave dwellings, while architecture proper does not develop (from weaving or in close association with weaving) until the neolithic period.

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to a variety of purposes and filled with individual pieces of furniture of various conflicting styles.

Apart from the specific purposes of rooms, we may distinguish historically two chief sorts of room, according as the covering is vaulted or flat, since the other elements, walls and floor, must remain invariable. These two forms of covering naturally determined æsthetically different sorts of interior decoration and the lack of harmony in modern interiors has come about partly through confused combinations of elements of one form, whose meaning has been forgotten, with those of the other style, partly also from the use of ready-made furniture supposed to fit any room. The truly decorative effect of any room covering, whether vaulted or flat, is seen most clearly when the structure is revealed by the exposed ribs or joists, as in Gothic buildings. Utilitarian considerations of heating, ease of cleaning, etc., brought about first the wooden ceilings which symbolize the hidden structure, and then the stucco or plaster ones which effectively conceal it and ruin the decorative effect. Thus it happens, too, that the impost moulding, or meeting-point of vault and side wall, comes with flat ceilings to be perpetuated (in accordance with the principle of æsthetic inertia above mentioned) in the form of borders on the wall or on the tapestry; and this results later in a division of the side wall by horizontal lines of wainscoting and shelving, which have meaning only in contrast with the upward thrust of the vault. In connection with flat ceilings they almost literally "bring down the roof." With the passing of the original organic condition of the room and the consequent isolation of windows, doors, and other elements from each other came wall-paper and draperies, whose function is to restore something of the lost unity by bringing the parts together as harmoniously as possible.

Interior decoration thus represents a secondary form of ornamental clothing by which man surrounds himself, which is expressive of the sex and personality of the indi-

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vidual for whom the room is designed. In so far as sex differences prevail in interior decoration they will naturally be found in connection with rooms devoted to the special use of male and female occupants, in which event all that has been said with regard to decorative clothing in the narrower sense will apply here in principle. Interior decoration should also be in general accord with clothing in the first sense discussed for which it serves in æsthetic epochs of history as a supporting background. Thus it is in the period of the rococo, where we find, in spite of many defects, a stylistic harmony between the furniture and other interior decoration, and the costumes, manners, and customs, even including its music and architecture.¹

In the latter as a further form of clothing—the individual dwelling and the larger dwelling of the town or city—man expresses his completer social personality. The individual dwelling house before the devastating era of industrialism with its standardized tenement and apartment was, to an extent hardly dreamed of in these days of equalitarianism, the expression of the life purpose of the occupant in his specific relationship to the community; and this situation still prevails to some extent in European small towns and villages. A man's house was not merely his castle but also his garment. In temples, churches, and other symbols of public institutions we find only an additional layer of clothing, which in periods of homogeneous culture and æsthetic sensitivity present a general harmony with each other in the community, and with clothing in the other senses mentioned, that is of course lacking in periods of extreme standardization and lawless individualism. In the latter, both interior decoration and architecture appear in various unhistorical revivals, imitations, and eclectic combinations of previous forms which were at the time and place of their origin genuine styles. The problem of cloth-

¹ A similar parallelism of expression is evident in the art of Egypt, Assyria, in the period of the Gothic, etc.

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ing in the form of interior decoration and architecture is, however, a chapter by itself beyond the narrow limits of the present paper and is merely touched on here and there because of its suggestiveness in illuminating the problem of style in every field.

In any case, only the true artist in intimate touch with all the general and particular, social, æsthetic, and material factors involved can create a new style. The invention and development of specific costumes, rooms, and buildings is an art requiring genius for which here as elsewhere no recipe or rule of thumb can be given. Only by avoiding everything which stands in contradiction to the structural aspects of the object to be decorated; by obliterating or enhancing in a pleasing manner all natural defects; and finally, by obeying the law immanent in a given material, can results of real value be obtained. The general principles here set down are æsthetically universal. As such they must operate consciously or unconsciously as good taste, if we are to have in the future decorative clothing in any form which shall differ from our merely practical garments and other surroundings or from the bizarre "creations" which compete with them for the majority vote.

Chapter Seventeen

SEX AND CENSORSHIP

by MORRIS L. ERNST

FOR its first hundred years the United States was unafraid of sex. It was free of literary taboos except for a remnant of blasphemy. Although it did not approach sexual matters in any mood of high joy or open gayety, nevertheless, amorous excitement was a portion of the literary diet even though accompanied by some of the feeling of a naughty boy hiding from his teacher. Those men who drafted our Federal Constitution and signed our Declaration of Independence bulged their cheeks in naughty giggles when reading the works of Fielding or Sterne. The plays of Congreve were presented without expurgation and there was no substantial demand in the land for the importation of a Master of the Revels who, since the days of Fielding's attack on Walpole, had been using his shears on the drama of Great Britain. *The Taming of the Shrew* was performed without deleting even the wasp dialogue.

Sexual literature was openly sold in all of the states and territories, but in all probability the manufacture and sale of so-called dirty postal cards had not even made an appearance. Bookleggers were not known.

The very early tariff acts contained clauses intended to bar foreign obscenities. This manifestation was more anti-

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foreign than anti-sex. Public dress was, of course, strictly circumscribed. So strictly, that in many portions of New England a maiden was not allowed to wear her hair in braids. The lawmakers thought that such method of head-dress was too provocative to the growing youth of the land. But this was strictly Puritan—a fetching for outward decency and public conformity.

Up to 1870 the great classics of all languages, as well as the writings of contemporary authors, were not hauled off to the headquarters of vice agents in a frenzied search for material which might corrupt the young. Literary freedom was curtailed only for women, who were deemed unable to meet all of the literature of the day with complete frankness. The feminist movement had not gained much headway, but white men were considered immune from corruption. The reading of negroes was, of course, restricted. In some states it was made a crime to offer even a Bible to a negro. Both the negro and feminine restricted areas were obviously attempts to keep male and white supremacy.

And then around 1870 the lid was clamped down on matters gonadic. A new era began. The name of Comstock has been indelibly attached to this second period. He was the leader. He was a symbol for all those who were sexually repressed. His diaries indicate the pathetic distress of a man of unnatural habits. He suffered with a horrible guilt, all through life, when he felt that he had thus sinned against God. But his immediate backers were the wealthy bankers of the day. Delightful old harum-scarums acted as Founders of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

Censorship spread over the land like a prairie fire. The Federal Government declared that the mails were a privilege and not a right of the people and that no obscenity should go into a mail pouch. State after state declared that obscene matter was illegal. But in not a single legislative hall was a definition of obscenity attempted.

The only specific, identified, objective ban was the one

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laid against contraceptive information and apparatus. Up to 1870 the entire press had run advertisements of methods of birth control. Of a sudden, our American scene underwent a change. Contraceptives had to be smuggled into the offices of doctors and under the counters of drug stores. Advice as to proficient and æsthetic methods of preventing birth was taboo even to the medical profession. This rather important field of public health was cast into such bad odour that the medical profession became cowardly before the danger of being called lewd or obscene. The birth control laws had been associated with a concept of Indecency.

After 1870 the surreptitious printers began to flourish. Thousands of postal cards depicting the sexual act in normal or so-called perverted positions were printed and sold to men and women and children. Books banned from the mails were in great demand. Condemned works sold at high prices and excessive profits. Theatrical productions permitted all through the civilized world—even England—were suppressed. *Sappho*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *The Captive*, *Maya*, *God of Vengeance*, all excited the vice hunters. Burlesque shows and semi-nude chorus girls were not interfered with, but *Strange Interlude* could not open in Boston.

The works of Walt Whitman, freely distributed from 1855 to 1888, were then suppressed. *The Arabian Nights*, *Decameron*, portions of the Bible separately printed, *Hagar Revelly*, *Ulysses*, and scores of volumes were haled into courts. More and more books dealing with sexual details of love-making were turned out by authors and publishers as a sort of defiance to the Comstocks. The public appetite for so-called obscenity was whetted. The censors helped make the people obscenity-conscious. The vice hunters should really have been paid handsome sums by those who wished to take their sex vicariously.

And in this clash, our reading became more frank. Not

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that we had as yet come to the same stage of bawdy and robust sexual reading that Washington and Jefferson and Madison enjoyed. In fact, we had not even approximated the unexpurgated plays of Shakespeare, or the writings of Dryden, Pope, Beaumont and Fletcher, or any of the great British authors who have survived. But we were on our way.

The vice hunters acted as the advertising agents of sex. Several books that would have sold a paltry few thousand were printed in the tens of thousands because Mr. Sumner was shocked. Try as he would to keep the names of the attacked volumes out of his annual reports, the press spread the gospel and, by word of mouth, people whispered about *The Well of Loneliness* or the Dennett pamphlet. The former became a Lesbian bible and sold in excess of 100,000 copies, and the demand for the latter kept pace with each step in the legal proceedings.

Boston went on rampages. Hundreds of volumes were attacked in the Boston Book Massacres. *An American Tragedy* was convicted by a judge and jury, and the highest court of the state sustained the conviction; it would corrupt those into whose hands it might come. This volume was legal in New York City—at the other end of the Post Road. In fact, it was prescribed reading at Harvard University—across the river from Boston.

Books and plays were the early windmills for our censors. And then came their great boon—the movies. Six states were persuaded to create political boards of official censors. Millions of feet of film were cut each year. In one state a hairpin was deleted—too stimulating to men in those days of bobbed hair. New York tried to ban pictures of corrupt politicians. Kansas said no liquor might be shown.

Of course, paradoxes appeared on the scene. Massachusetts, convicting the salesman of Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, voted down state censorship of the movies. And voted it down by a handsomer majority than was registered

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against the enforcement of liquor legislation. New York attacked Lesbian themes, such as *The Well of Loneliness*, and Boston never even batted an eye at female inversion. The Federal courts acquitted the publisher of *Hagar Revely* and the New York courts within three months condemned the book. Books were legal in Chicago but banned in New York, legal on a Tuesday and illegal on a Wednesday.

The ban indices of the two great Federal agencies—Post Office and Customs, seldom agreed. Y.M.C.A.'s ordered the Dennett pamphlet by the thousands, while the directors of these Y.M.C.A.'s, sitting as directors of vice societies, tried to suppress the volume.

Plays ran an entire season on Broadway and on tour, but a screen version was not allowed. Sexual material was permitted at times, if sold in expensive bindings, but attacked if sold at two dollars a volume. The rich had either been corrupted or were not worth saving. Judges, clerks of the courts, and jurors seldom returned the copies of the books containing alleged obscenity and presented in court by the vice societies.

Liberals in the general fields of economic thought sided with the Comstocks in their crusades on sex. Walter Lippmann was the standard bearer for some of the bitterest campaigns conducted against sex magazines and theatrical productions. Many who stood with Jefferson in his plea for a wide-open market in economic thought shied away from sex. To agitate for a revolution, they asserted, should be permitted until some overt act has been committed. The preaching of murder should not be interfered with in advance of some open act. But to depict sexual love-making—that was another thing entirely. That, they declared, was so certain to corrupt the nation that in advance of any proof of injury, even to a moron, the perpetrator should be brought before a jury.

It is amazing how many people who belong to an or-

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ganization such as the Civil Liberties Union are afraid of the right to spread ideas sexual. They endeavour to preserve their attitude of freedom of thought by opposing the *obscenity* laws but are outraged by a thing called *pornography*, which they cannot define and the prosecution of which they accept as a social need. There is plenty of hiding space behind the weasel words of any law. The twilight zone between obscenity and pornography is beyond the capacity of human visibility.

The creed of anarchy or the fighting gospels of communism, they contend, should be allowed free dissemination. A change in government even by force holds no horrors for such liberals. Let everyone express his ideas without any interference in advance. The danger to the state is slight, and even if great, did not Jefferson say that a revolution every decade or so is good fertilizer for a vital commonwealth? But men and women—their sexual libidos—hush, hush! There you will find danger. The hearth, the young, are threatened. Men may not go home to their wives, and wives may be educated up to a curiosity for diversity of sexual experience.

Very few men in or out of the scientific professions stood up in the community and shouted: "Where is the proof that any of this sexual material is injurious? Is it not only a matter of taste? Can obscenity be defined, and if defined, is it not a word of subjective changing content? Is there a voltage of sex to be allowed in a book and does the silver screen rate a smaller dose? And what about the famous First Amendment to the Constitution, called the Bill of Rights, which we all had been brought up to think guaranteed complete freedom of thought?"

For nearly sixty years the Constitution was forgotten. The Supreme Court had been shocked by the Comstock exhibits of 1870. The mails were shut off from obscenity. This, in spite of the fact that in 1835 Clay, Calhoun, and Webster had all declared in a stirring Senate debate that

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any censorship of the mails was not only unconstitutional, but highly dangerous. But that occurred when an attempt was being made to use the mail censorship in order to prevent Abolitionist literature from seeping into the South.

And the Supreme Court whittled away a large piece of the Constitution when the censorship of the movies was sustained. On that occasion the hedging was more difficult. They had to go so far as to say that the movies had nothing to do with ideas, and hence, deserved none of the protection of the constitutional guaranties of free speech or free press. The court declared that the screen was merely an exhibit, like a flea circus, and hence any state could license and regulate and censor to its heart's desire. And six states and many cities have done so. Pictures portraying pacifists have been banned in Pennsylvania and New York, thus virtually destroying the national market. Ridicule of Volsteadism is not permitted. The censors, forgetting that the Supreme Court said that the movies did not deal in ideas, have persistently censored ideas objectionable to themselves or their jobs, and at times when rushed with business, State Troopers, as in New York, have been called in to handle the shears.

For nearly fifty years, 1870-1920, campaigns against all sexual matters were waged. Thousands of dollars were poured into the vice societies. Police officers were prodded into action by these extra-legal agencies, often endowed with special powers and at times authorized to retain a portion of the fines resulting in cases where they had been the entrappers.

But the tide swept on. From Comstock's point of view, the citizens were always rushing faster and faster to purgatory. The censors failed to recognize that the styles in obscenity had changed just as women on bathing beaches had dropped off their flounced sleeves and their cotton stockings. One-piece suits appeared on the beaches and in our novels.

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And then in true American fashion the first real signs of a shift appeared. We have always been a people of anarchistic tendencies. Law has never been sacred. We nullify whenever the lawgivers, judges, or legislators hand us a statute not to our liking. We even agree with Emerson that immoral legislation should be disregarded.

For a time nullification is quiet and orderly. We profess admiration for the laws when they might protect others, but, like the censors of books, we are certain that we ourselves cannot be harmed. And then comes a time when the courts balk at the hypocrisy of the land. Judges and jurors cannot longer subscribe to oaths of office and see the laws flaunted. And from the benches come the decisions which whittle away the objectionable statutes. Thus do the courts reinterpret so as to save us from further open defiance.

By legal definitions we are at last told that the Congress or the Legislatures did not mean that negroes have the right to vote or to serve as jurors, or to attend certain public schools. Judge after judge explains to the South that civil liberty was not obtained for the negroes by the Civil War and certainly was not intended by the constitutional amendments which followed. And so it was with this thing called Obscenity.

Many courts, after 1915, started to sense the mood of the people. Judges were in a sorry plight. What they condemned in one summer they found on the newsstands the following winter. *Three Weeks*, by Elinor Glynn, was suppressed in Boston by the highest jurists. One year later, if they reread it, they must have wondered what they had been shocked at. Legal decisions affecting literature were overridden by the people. Obscenity was recognized as merely a fashion, a passing style. With this in mind, the courts had to keep up to date or the public would be reading matter that the judges had said would corrupt them.

Since 1915, the leading vice agency of the United States, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, has

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failed to gain a single conviction in a single case where a book was published with an established publisher's imprint, where the book had been openly sold by the retailers and reviewed by the press. In other words, acceptance in the ordinary book trade and book public was regarded by the court as a standard in testing obscenity. The testimony or the blush of a paid attorney for a vice society was no longer gospel.

Hagar Revelly was the turning-point. Since that conviction, the vice societies have been relegated to surreptitious prints, postals, little scraps of paper stealthily disseminated under the counter by people who acted in a guilty fashion.

Let us look at the battle-field and the withdrawing line of the Comstocks. They attacked Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. After a bitter struggle the court held the book to be a classic—legal and pure, even though the highest court of New York commented on the fact that the avowed purpose of the volume was to make light of virtue and to glorify fornication. The clerk who was arrested sued and recovered several thousand dollars from the Society for false arrest and malicious prosecution.

Cabell's *Jurgen* was next brought on the mat. One of the ablest criminal judges declared it to be immune. It was too sophisticated; too few would understand its subtleties. Petronius' *Satyricon* was haled into court. A long opinion. This was aged in the wood. It was pre-Comstock stuff, hence legal. *A Young Girl's Diary* and *Women in Love* received honourable mention from the judges. Juries were bored by the reading of *Replenishing Jessica*, and, as a result, length and boredom were accepted as grants of immunity. *The Well of Loneliness* dealt with homosexuality. The theme shocked the censors. But our wise judges refused to condemn any book on its theme alone.

Mary Ware Dennett sold thousands of her pamphlet, *The Sex Side of Life*, dealing, among other things, with

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the subjects of masturbation and venereal disease. The pamphlet even said that the sexual act was the greatest physical joy of man. Without setting up possible alternatives, the censors threatened Mrs. Dennett with jail. A jury conviction had to be overturned by the judges in the Circuit Court of Appeals. Sexual education took a big spurt.

After ten years of suppression a new attempt was made to legalize Schnitzler's *Casanova's Homecoming*. A magistrate said that times had changed, but the vice agents still thought that maybe the grand jurors would not agree with such heresy. The book was cleared and a grand jury read the book and refused to indict.

The controversy over Dr. Marie Stopes' books caused many men and women to go to jail a decade ago. But in 1931, not only was *Married Love* (it sold 700,000 in England) allowed into our land, but the Federal Courts permitted the importation of her other books, *Wise Parenthood, 5000 Cases*, and *Contraception*.

What were we coming to? *Contraception* is a book giving pictures of various contraceptive devices. For decades the medical profession had believed that the best of European knowledge in the field of birth control had to be smuggled into this land of the free.

The bookleggers of the standard works of Holland, Germany, and England were promptly put out of business by this decision of Federal Judge Woolsey.

But to cap the climax, the Federal authorities have generously and wisely admitted *The Sex Factors in Marriage*. This book, written by Dr. Helena M. Wright, and sold for two dollars, treats of sex as a joy and a gay thing. The pleasure motif is the consideration of the author. It is not a classic. It is not old. It is not sophisticated. It is not technical. It is not a bore. And still it is openly sold. The door is wide open for the public to accept and read it.

Frank sexual educational tracts may be legally sent

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through the mails. Homosexuality is an admitted theme. Books which deal with birth control may be imported. Contraceptives may be sent through the mails to doctors or druggists, if for prevention of disease as well as the prevention of birth. Classics encouraging infidelity have been approved by our high courts. Crudities of expression, skatological references, have been held to be neither obscene, lewd, nor lascivious. The campaigns of the sex hunters are virtually at an end unless the vendor of the picture or the tract enters the court room with an air of guilt, with the taint of stealth.

The battle over sex is fading. It is not a question of any side winning. Time has a way of putting all human beings to flight. But the vice hunters won't be unhappy long, for the essence of their joy is unrelated to the object of attack. Any target is a good target. And a new target is in the offing.

To be sure there are still black areas in a land our size. The movie cutters, the Boston police, and a random art critic in the Federal Treasury Office once in a while sit up and object to pictures showing pubic hair, or the portrayal on the screen of the sexual misbehaviour of a member of the clergy.

But by and large the sex taboo in literature is approaching a temporary end. And the shift is definitely into the field of crimes of violence. Already the men and women who thought the nation would be destroyed if it learned the biology of propagation see another doomsday in the tabloid accounts of gangsters and in the movie romances of crime. In various states attempts have already been made to introduce legislation to prevent any picture or story of crime. A New York newspaper was attacked on the ground that it was principally filled with stories of crime and bloodshed.

How far we will go in building up a secret business in detective stories it is hard to say. But it must be obvious

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that this shift from sex to crimes of violence will mean additional support for the vice hunters. Do these crime movies encourage criminal tendencies? Do our gangster stories make or merely reflect the gangster elements in our social make-up? How far would a ban on crime features act as a protection to corrupt officialdom? Are we going to distinguish between the crimes of the bandits and the more subtle devices of stealing the nation's reserves of oil? We will not wait to study. We will not care for the answers. Here is another chance to tell others what they may read and see. The joy of feeling superior, of being unaffected by influences which will injure our weaker brethren, brings delight to most mortals. It is more satisfying to censor others than ourselves. It is easier.

The American people are for the most part sexually unsatisfied. Few are finding the sexually full life. The ban on reading of the sexual excitements of the heroes and heroines of literature ran smack into this American void. Even stories of sexual frustrations were in a measure a form of catharsis. Even the most inhibited still were able to dream.

But as a people we are not intent on brandishing guns. Not all of us can see torture and pain without wincing. To throttle pictures of sadism will not be found highly objectionable to many. The deeper significance of this new object of censorship will escape the American people. We learn nothing from our suppressions. The mere taboo of gangster stories will create more talk among the youth of the land than all the pictures that Hollywood can produce in a decade.

Every book and picture will pass close to the frontier of what the censors will allow. The public attention will be directed to those very edges of the allowable, and the human imagination, lashed by the taboo, will carry the audiences far beyond what any author or producer could create. Eventually we will start to realize that the slums and inde-

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cencies of our society make for criminality, and that a free, open portrayal of life as anyone sees it is the only adult way for a people to live. We are not converted to celibacy by Comstockery, and brutality and guns will not be discarded by similar tactics in the realm of racketeering.

It is only a matter of taste. I say *only* because I mean that the state, of all agencies, is most feebly equipped to control any realm of human thought.

